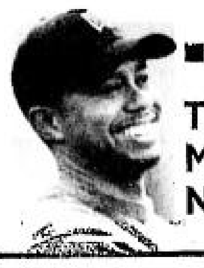
Entertainment / A2-1

Beauty tilt welcomes married women

News / A3

Ex-PBA star's daughter sides with mother



Sports / A24

Tiger pips Mickelson, regains No. 1 ranking

News / A2

Military: Bomb suspect MILF member

Tanong ng Bayan / A18

Dapat bang mag-retiro na ang Santo Papa?

CELLCARD KADA ARAW, CELLPHONE KADA LINGGO! Text 2910 now!

Bank says cost of living to rise with VAT increase

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

THE COST of living in the country is expected to soar to nearly double the minimum wage due to President Macapagal-Arroyo's plan to increase the value-added tax (VAT) and allow utility firms to charge higher electricity and water rates, according to a report by Swiss

BANK/ A4

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

US military shows gentler side in Laguna

LUISIANA, Laguna—Pulling teeth, performing circumcisions and building schools—this is the gentler side of the military that the United States is increasingly eager to show the world.

US MILITARY/ A6

ALAM NA ANG THE BAD AND UGLY... THE GOOD NAMAN!

email: feedback@inquirer.com.ph

Tuesday, March 8, 2005 ★★ 44 pages 4 sections Vol. 20 No. 90 P18

website: www.inq7.net

Broadcast bloc denies air time to terrorists

AN ALLIANCE of Philippine radio and television outfits yesterday pledged to deny air time to terrorist groups after the Armed Forces complained some media sectors were serving as virtual mouthpieces of the enemies of the state.

Kapisanan ng mga Brodkaster sa Pilipinas (KBP) president Ruperto Nicdao Jr. reminded television and radio networks that their licenses were covered by franchises that the government may revoke for broadcasts that jeopardize the "security of the state," Agence France-Presse reported.

"We have been telling our members to avoid contacts with proven terrorist groups whose criminal activities are known," Nicdao, concurrent president of Manila Broadcasting Co., said on radio.

Network giant ABS-CBN backed the statement.

"ABS-CBN, as a member of the KBP, supports the position of the Kapisanan regarding interviewing terrorists," the network said in a statement.

"KBP has developed its own guidelines as part of its self-regulating measures even before the government's present directive," it added.

Nicdao said allowing terrorist groups air time could give them the opportunity to broadcast "coded messages" that could threaten national security.

He said the self-regulating KBP was reviewing its radio code of conduct, which does not have specific sanctions for broadcasting "terrorist" messages.

BROADCAST/A18

Cordillera seen as 3rd logging area

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo inspects seized logs floating on the Agusan River in San Luis, Agusan del Sur. She earlier announced the lifting of the logging ban in two regions in Mindanao.

EDWIN BACASMAS

Defensor lifts ban in Davao, Caraga

By Blanche S. Rivera

THE DEPARTMENT of Environment and Natural Resources has approved logging in only two regions in Mindanao but may allow logging in one region in Luzon.

Environment Secretary Michael Defensor yesterday issued a memorandum allowing the resumption of logging operations in Region 11 (Davao) and Caraga but not in Region 9 (Zamboanga Peninsula) as he had earlier announced.

He said the DENR was studying whether it would be more "administratively efficient" to allow logging in the Cordillera Autonomous Region (CAR) in Luzon, where many of the country's furniture makers are based.

In Butuan City, President Macapagal-Arroyo officially announced the lifting of the total log ban in Mindanao.

"I authorize Secretary Defensor to allow legal logging in [two] regions, including Caraga," the President told reporters during her arrival at the Bancasi Airport yesterday morning.

Ms Arroyo said Aurora, Quezon and Nueva Vizcaya, which were hardest hit by landslides last December, would be declared protected areas while the log ban in other regions would stay.

Massive landslides and flash floods killed hundreds of people

CORDILLERA / A4

Malaysia to speed up return of Filipino workers

By Volt Contreras and Jerome Aning

THE PHILIPPINES and Malaysia yesterday hammered out procedures that would allow thousands of Filipinos booted out by Malaysian authorities to return to their jobs.

The two countries agreed on the arrangements following reports that Kuala Lumpur's crackdown on illegal immigrants was creating a shortage of cheap labor in critical industries, such as in the construction and plantation sectors.

Under the agreement, Malaysia will send immigration officials to Mindanao to speed up the return to Malaysia of the deported Filipinos, the Department of Foreign Affairs said.

Malaysia offered to post its officials at "one-stop processing centers" which had been put up by the Philippine government in Zamboanga and Bongao, Tawi-Tawi.

The centers were largely designed to help the Filipino returnees put their working papers in order so they could immediately return to Malaysia and resume their jobs.

Co-manned by social workers, the centers are also intended to help the returnees get back to their hometowns if they no longer want to return to Malaysia.

The Malaysian officials are expected to arrive on March 14 and will help man the centers to "accelerate the process of reentry and reemployment" of Filipinos, the DFA said.

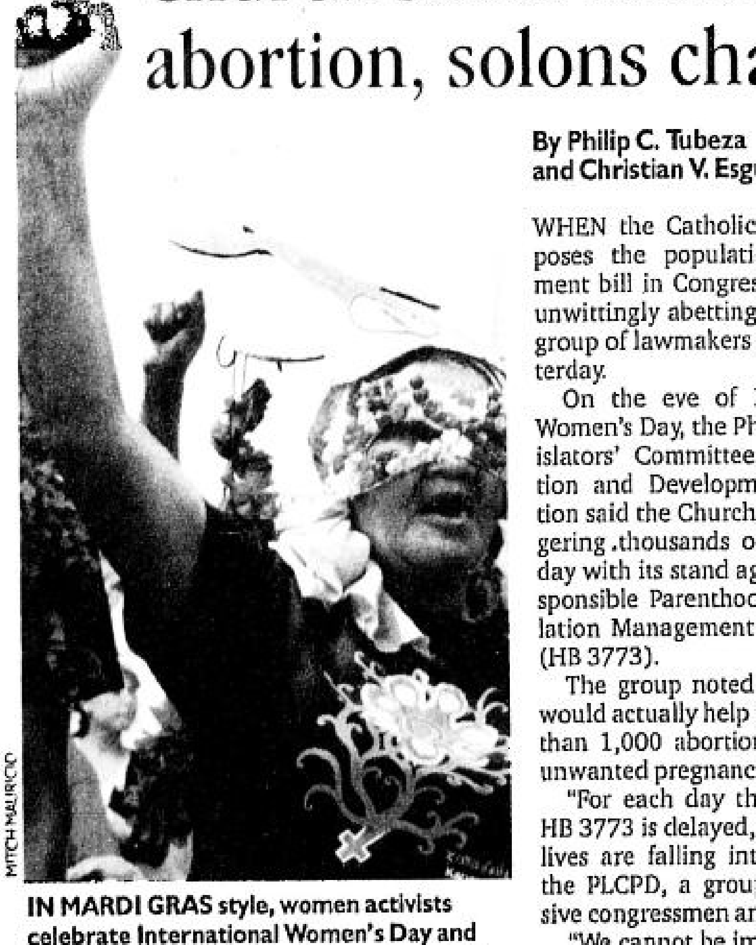
Malaysia also vowed to "keep the repatriation of Filipinos in manageable numbers so as to avoid overcrowding" at the processing centers, it said.

The arrangements were reached during the first meeting held by the RP-Malaysia Working Group on Migrant Workers.

The body was formed as a result of previous Philippine missions to Kuala Lumpur for the smooth repatriation of Filipinos who would be caught in the im-

MALAYSIA/ A6

Church stand abetting abortion, solons charge



MITCH MAURICIO

IN MARDI GRAS style, women activists celebrate International Women's Day and the centennial of the feminist movement in the Philippines with a rally in Quezon City.

By Philip C. Tubeza and Christian V. Esguerra

WHEN the Catholic Church opposes the population management bill in Congress today, it is unwittingly abetting abortions, a group of lawmakers charged yesterday.

On the eve of International Women's Day, the Philippine Legislators' Committee on Population and Development Foundation said the Church was "endangering .thousands of lives" each day with its stand against the Responsible Parenthood and Population Management Act of 2005 (HB 3773).

The group noted that the bill would actually help prevent more than 1,000 abortions caused by unwanted pregnancies daily.

"For each day the passage of HB 3773 is delayed, thousands of lives are falling into ruin," said the PLCPD, a group of progressive congressmen and senators.

"We cannot be impeded by the Church's unfounded allegations.

CHURCH/ A6

4 women cadets in PMA's Top 10

By Frank Cimatu and Vincent Cabreza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

FORT DEL PILAR, Baguio City—In a fitting salute to International Women's Day, four of the 12 female graduating cadets of the Philippine Military Academy landed in the top 10 of their class, the highest number in 11 years since PMA began accepting women.

."It's not an issue of women versus men," said Cadet Geraldine Abigail Albano Hallar, who, at No. 4, was the highest placed female cadet.

"We are all cadets who went through the same training," said Hallar, who hails from Bacarra, Ilocos Norte.

Carol Ena Sabijon of Iloilo ranked 5th; Deodelyn Aquilar of San Quintin, Pangasinan, 6th, and Marjorie Mukay of Tabuk, Kalinga, 10th.

Mukay is the first Kalinga woman to land in the top 10.

The PMA began accepting female applicants in 1993 as part of the Women in Nation-Building Act. The first batch, which graduated in 1997, had three women in the top 10.

A Lipa City resident will lead this year's 149 graduating PMA cadets on Saturday at Borromeo Field here.

Top graduate Cadet Brian Cera Rayton, who grew up in Fernando Air Base in Lipa City, is the son of a retired military official. He is one of 28 graduates in the class who are dependents of military personnel.

Class president and baron, Cadet Antonio Bulao I of Davao City, is the salutatorian and the only magna cum laude in the class.

Also among the top graduates are Cadets Michael Angelo Patron of San

4 WOMEN/ A18

TOOTS SOBERANO/PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

WOMEN on top of PMA class: (From left) Cadets Marjorie Mukay, 10th place; Deodelyn Aguilar, sixth; Carol Ena Sabijon, fifth, and Geraldine Albano Hallar, fourth.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

TUESDAY, MARCH 8, 2005

Second FRONTPAGE

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WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Visayas and Mindanao will experience mostly cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers. The rest of the country will have partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers and thunderstorms.

SOURCE: PAGASA

COMPILED BY: RAY LEYESA, PDI RESEARCH/03/08/05

Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Partly Cloudy	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Partly Cloudy	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Partly Cloudy	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

'WHAT FRIENDS ARE FOR'

Palace hoping US would restore aid

By Christine O. Avendaño

MALACAÑANG is enlisting the help of the county's supporters in Washington to persuade the Bush administration to change its mind about slashing its aid to the Philippines by 30 percent next year.

"We have very good friends and sympathizers in the US capital . . . who are very sympathetic to our cause. They have been pushing for the interests of the Philippines and we will continue to rely on them as well as on the support of officials in Washington," Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye told reporters yesterday.

At a news briefing, Bunye identified the group of Americans as the Philippine Caucus, which actively helps the country push its causes in Washington.

This was the same group that helped convince the California Public Employees Retirement System, the third largest pension fund in the world, to keep its investments in the Philippines, according to Bunye.

Bunye was reacting to reports that the administration of US President George W. Bush had recommended that the US aid package to the Philippines be reduced from $124 million to $87.8 million. The recommendation was contained in the budget the White House had submitted to the US Congress.

The proposed cut would reduce assistance for military financing from $30 million to $20 million; the economic support fund from $35 million to $20 million; development assistance from $26 million to $21.5 million, and international military education and training from $3 million to $2.9 million.

Assistance for children's survival and health would be cut from $28 million to $21.4 million.

The international narcotics control and law enforcement package was left untouched at $2 million.

The smaller aid package was reportedly the result of the US assessment that the Philippines had "more or less contained the terror group Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) in Mindanao." The JI has been linked to the terrorist network of Osama bin Laden.

Bunye acknowledged "the recognition given to our terrorism gains." But he urged the United States to reconsider its decision "considering such assistance bridges our limited resources to build up overall law enforcement capabilities."

He said Washington's recommendation to cut the aid package to Manila should serve as a "wake up call" for the country.

"(W)e realize that we cannot forever rely on US assistance to ensure our national security, and this should serve as a wake-up call for the executive and Congress to work together to strengthen revenue generation and administrative measures to enable us to stand on our feet completely on this matter," Bunye said in a statement.

Military: Bomb suspect MILF member

By Dona Z. Pazzibugan

THE LATEST suspect arrested in connection with the SM Megamall bombing more than four years ago is connected to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, according to the military.

But military officials sidestepped questions linking the separatist group to the May 21, 2000, bombing that killed one person and injured several others.

Rahib Buday, 49, an Arabic teacher, was presented to the media at Camp Aguinaldo yesterday morning.

He was arrested by military intelligence operatives at his home in Pagalungan, Maguindanao, Friday on the basis of a warrant of arrest issued by a Mandaluyong Regional Trial Court.

The Army earlier described Buday as one of the suspects in the Feb. 14 bus bombing in Makati City.

But Brig. Gen. Jose Angel Honrado, military spokesperson, yesterday said the military had not established Buday's link to the deadly Valentine's Day bombing that killed four people and wounded 100.

"It's premature to say that (he's a suspect in the Feb. 14 bombing). The investigation will reveal whether he is really involved or not," Honrado said.

The military claimed that Buday had helped two MILF members who were earlier charged with murder and frustrated murder in connection with the Megamall bombing.

The two suspects, Dante Ambon and Danny Boisan, were arrested in August 2003.

Only one more suspect, Nabel Panayaman, who is also an MILF member, remains at large.

Still, the AFP avoided linking the MILF to the bombing. "Even if we prove that these (suspects) are MILF (members), that does not necessarily mean that the commission of the act was sanctioned by the organization," Honrado said.

"As they say, in any organization there are bad eggs," he said.

Though nearly five years have passed since the bombing, Honrado claimed the military had not established who the mastermind was. "At this point I think we are not in a position to determine the mastermind," he said.

"There is a continuous interrogation being conducted and we will determine the brains behind this bombing but I am sorry we cannot divulge the names or the affiliation," the military spokesperson said.

The military said Buday admitted during interrogation that he sheltered the two men who carried out the bombing.

Buday was allegedly following orders from Panayaman, the suspect who remains at large.

It was allegedly Panayaman who supplied the bomb materials to Boisan and Ambon.

The military said Boisan revealed that Buday and Panayaman recruited him to the MILF in 1995.

Col. Restituto Aguilar, officer in charge of the 602nd Brigade in Carmen, North Cotabato, said Buday had admitted in a TV interview that they exploded the bomb to show that the government was not in control of the country.

RANDY Buday, a suspect in the Megamall bombing in May 2000, remains defiant as he is presented to media in Camp Aguinaldo. JOAN BONDOC

Minimi contract placed on hold

THE SECOND contract to buy more M249 Squad Automatic Weapon (Saw) light machine guns, or Minimis, was put on hold due to a question in price, a top military official said yesterday.

Maj. Gen. Reynaldo Rivera, chief of the Armed Forces modernization program, said the contract to buy 1,739 Minimis was "under review" due to "new (government) regulations" passed by an inter-agency board.

At the same time, Sen. Rodolfo Biazon has sought a Senate inquiry on the alleged anomalous purchase of the Minimis.

Biazon, chair of the Senate committee on national defense and security, filed a resolution asking the committee to investigate the alleged overpriced contract of the AFP with FNH for the purchase of 402 Minimis for P117.4 million in 2002 and a second order of 1,700 units for P593.3 million in September 2004.

"Allegations of overpricing have been raised because when the United States government purchased the same weapon from FNH, it only cost them $9.5 million for 3,979 units, or $2,401.50 per unit, compared to the $5,088.20 cost per unit to the AFP," Biazon said in his resolution.

Rivera said the Government Policy and Procurement Board wanted the purchase price in the second contract pegged to the price set under the first contract. *D. Pazzibugan, J. Javellana*

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Governor confirms Jemaah presence in Maguindanao

By TJ Burgonio
and Margaux C. Ortiz

SHARIFF AGUAK, Maguindanao—Gov. Datu Andal Ampatuan has confirmed the presence of Jemaah Islamiyah members in his province but clarified the terror group has been on the move since they were first spotted last month in nearby Talitay town.

Ampatuan was quick to blame some political figures for the purported hosting of the terrorists by a local commander of an armed group that figured prominently in previous attacks in this town.

He recalled that the commander, identified in military reports as Ustadz Wahid Tundok, raided last month a military detachment manned by Muslim Army personnel, in Barangay Linantangan in Mamasapano town.

Worried over the fate of 51,000 evacuees fighting off hunger and disease in the mountains, legislators from Mindanao yesterday issued an appeal to the government to halt massive military operations against insurgents in Jolo, Sulu.

The lawmakers, led by Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr., said the government should declare a ceasefire with followers of jailed Moro leader Nur Misuari to give the evacuees access to safe shelter and basic goods.

"We are asking the government to secure the lives of civilians there. There are 51,000 evacuees now in the mountains, and still growing. And they have no food, no shelter, no medicine," Pimentel told reporters after meeting with Muslim leaders.

"These are men, women and children who are non-combatants. We are a little apprehensive [about their safety]," he added.

Pimentel, however, stressed that any ceasefire should not apply to the Abu Sayyaf bandits, believed to have aided Misuari's followers in repulsing the combat troops in fierce fighting last month.

At least 100 people, including 34 soldiers, died in the intense firefight that lasted more than a week, and forced more than 50,000 villagers to flee.

"We are asking the government to continue running after and isolating the Abu Sayyaf. We have no problem with that. All of us here agree that we should run after and if possible exterminate the Abu Sayyaf," Pimentel said.

President Macapagal-Arroyo rejected a proposed truce brokered by Muslim leaders in Jolo last Friday, saying there would be no "letup in punitive actions" against the guerrillas.

Pimentel said there might be some moves by the government to protect the evacuees, but said he found these "inadequate."

"That's why as much as possible, we're asking that there should be a ceasefire to enable the relief agencies of government and donors to come in and succor the civilian population, who are the collateral damage in this war," he said.

Meanwhile, members of a Muslim youth group yesterday asked Malacañang to withdraw the government troops from Mindanao and realign the military budget to improve the region's economy and infrastructure. *With a report from Nash B. Maulana, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Fernandez child sides with mom

By Fe B. Zamora

SAYING she only wanted the truth to come out, Ma. Bianca R. Fernandez yesterday sided with her mother Marissa in the latter's fight against her father, basketball star Ramon Fernandez.

Bianca said she once saw her mother sporting a bloodied mouth after an argument with her father.

And corroborating her mother's claim that Fernandez had been unfaithful, Bianca said her father had even ordered her mother to apologize "to the other woman" whom she (Marissa) had engaged in a text conversation.

"I am deeply saddened and sorry that things are so bad with my parents. But I cannot stand idly by while certain lies and untruths are being spread about my mom and the circumstances that led to the collapse of my parents' marriage," Bianca, a 23-year-old student, said in a statement.

The statement has given yet another peek into the private life of Fernandez, known during his storied playing days as "El Presidente."

On Valentine's Day, Marissa Fernandez sought protection from Ramon, whom she accused of physical abuse and infidelity during their 27-year marriage. The couple have four children and a grandchild.

Fernandez, 52, has denied the charges. He has countered by filing for annulment on the grounds that Marissa, 47, was psychologically incompetent in fulfilling her duties as a wife and mother.

Bianca debunked her father's charges, saying, "My mom is a very good mother, if not the best."

Bianca said she "didn't want to take sides" in her parents' marital spat, but it was "inevitable that I have to state the truth."

By coming out, Bianca said she was also risking hurting and even "losing the love and trust" of a parent. But she had to do it, "so the truth would be known and justice may be served."

According to her, her father physically beat her mother. "I witnessed one such beating," she said.

She said she first heard the couple arguing and got scared when there was "total silence" from the room.

She said she opened the door and found Marissa "on the corner of the bed crouching and crying." Bianca said her mom's mouth was bloodied.

"I dragged her out of the room, brought her to my room and locked the door," she said. She said she ignored her father's pleas to open the door.

"It is completely false and untrue that my father was always faithful to my mom," she also said, citing at least three instances when she said Fernandez admitted he was having an affair.

Bianca said her parents had been sharing the same room since they got married.

But Fernandez moved out of the bedroom in August 2004 "because my mom asked him to when she finally confirmed that my dad was having an affair with that woman from Cebu."

Bianca said she saw less of her dad in the months that followed. By October, Bianca said her dad stopped sleeping in the family home. But he comes by occasionally to get clothes or a car for his use, Bianca said.

Task of creating 6M jobs falls on Tiglao's lap

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo has added the creation of six million jobs in six years to the myriad tasks of the Presidential Management Staff following the resignation last month of "jobs czar" Luis "Cito" Lorenzo.

President Arroyo signed on March 3 Executive Order No. 408 which abolished the position of presidential adviser for job generation which Lorenzo used to hold and transferred his office's functions to the PMS.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye was quick to allay concerns that President Arroyo was going soft on her goal to create one million jobs a year in the next six years—a cornerstone of her 10-point pro-poor agenda—by relegating the task to an in-house function in the Palace and assigning it to an apparently overburdened office at that.

PMS is headed by Rigoberto Tiglao, who already oversees Malacañang's lifestyle checks on top of the heavy paperwork passing through his office.

"I don't think it's a mere Palace hand. It's a major outfit in the Office of the President," said Bunye.

Bunye, however, did not give any specific reason why the President felt the task of creating six millions jobs could be "adequately handled" by the PMS, when less than eight months ago she created a new post and assigned a respected businessman whose single task was to fulfill one of her campaign promises.

"At the start, the President really wanted to emphasize the importance of jobs generation and she felt the person who could do this was (former Agriculture) Secretary Lorenzo. But of course we have been overtaken by events," said Bunye, referring to Lorenzo's decision to quit the government.

Bunye said that Tiglao, head of PMS for the last three years, was given the new responsibility because of his "ability to deliver."

Gil Cabacungan Jr.

Was secret meet on tap to restore pork?

By Michael Lim Ubac
and Juliet Labog-Javellana

HOW ABOUT pork for dinner?

In a last ditch effort to restore the full amount of the graft-ridden pork barrel in the national budget, former Speaker Arnulfo Fuentebella yesterday sought a meeting with Sen. Manuel Villar, chair of the Senate finance committee, to end the bickering between the two chambers.

The meeting, which was to be held over dinner at 7 p.m. somewhere in Quezon City, was shrouded in mystery. Even Villar was tight-lipped on the exact place and time of the meeting.

"I don't know yet. He (Fuentebella) just called me up," Villar said when contacted by the INQUIRER through his mobile phone.

Senate President Franklin Drilon and Speaker Jose de Venecia—who is in Belgium—were not invited to the meeting.

"Yes, I'm aware of it (meeting), but I'm not going," Drilon said.

Drilon called for a ceasefire on Thursday and proposed a meeting between leaders of the Senate and the House of Representatives to patch things up and to seek ways to soothe the ruffled feelings of members of the lower chamber over the Senate's hasty approval of the P907.6-billion national budget.

House Minority Leader Francis Escudero voiced suspicion over the meeting. He earlier warned that certain House members could still tinker with the General Appropriations Act and restore the cuts in the pork barrel.

"They did that in the past. But we will not allow it," said Escudero.

Presidential Adviser on Political Affairs Gabriel Claudio, however, said the printing of the General Appropriations Act of 2005 was under heavy guard.

Claudio said the unusual circumstances surrounding the approval of the proposed national budget had prompted legislators to make sure there would be no tampering of the printed copy of the General Appropriations Act that would be signed into law by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

"Since there was no bicameral conference, it is natural for those in charge of the printing to do this with extreme caution," Claudio said in a phone interview.

The 2005 budget was approved without going through the traditional bicameral conference—where conflicting versions of the two houses would have been reconciled—after the Senate adopted the House version in toto last week.

The unprecedented Senate move was allegedly meant to prevent congressmen from restoring their pork barrel during the bicameral conference, an allegation denied by congressmen.

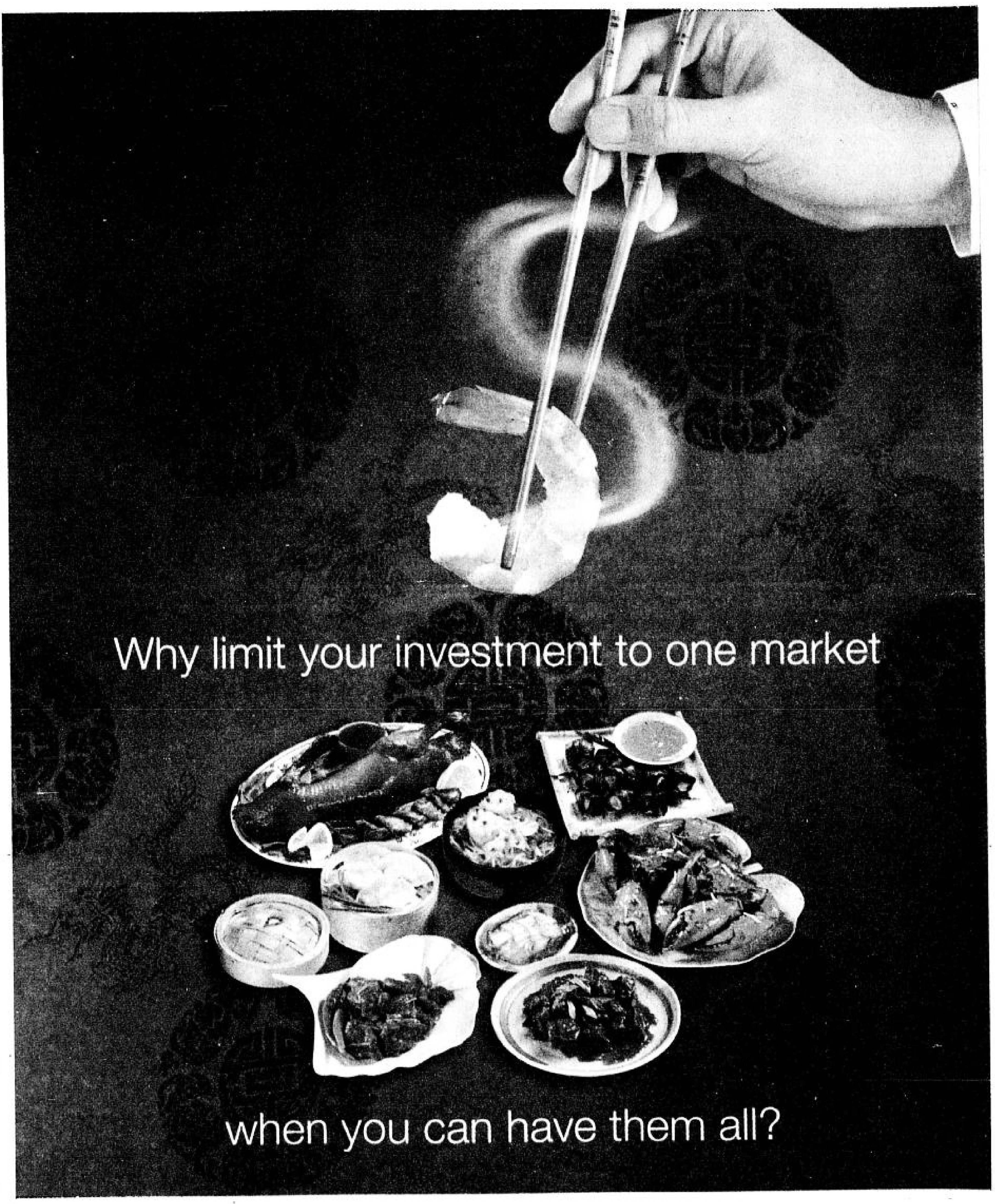
The House had earlier approved the budget proposed by the President which contained a 40-percent reduction in the Priority Development Assistance Fund, popularly known as pork barrel. Citing the fiscal deficit, Ms Arroyo reduced the pork barrel from P200 million to P120 million for each senator and from P70 million to P40 million for each member of the House.

Claudio said the printing of the 2005 GAA by APO-Neda, the government printing office, was proceeding smoothly under the tight watch of representatives from the Senate and the House as well as the Department of Budget Management.

A senator had earlier expressed concern that something might happen to the budget bill "on the way to the printing press."

The House was put in charge of the printing because the budget bill originated from the lower chamber.

Claudio said that while no senator or congressman was seen personally guarding the printing, the Senate Legislative Budget Research and Monitoring Office and the chief of the technical committee of the House appropriations committee would be monitoring the printing.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Cordillera region seen as third logging area

From page A1

in Aurora and Quezon late last year. The tragedy was blamed on logging in the Sierra Madre mountain range.

The President said she authorized the selective lifting of the ban "because thousands of poor families are suffering in areas where alternative means of livelihood are not yet available."

Ms Arroyo was in Butuan to conduct an aerial survey of the forest resources of Caraga, called the timber corridor of the Philippines. But torrential rains prevented her from taking a helicopter.

Caraga consists of Agusan del Norte, Agusan del Sur, Surigao del Sur and Surigao del Norte, while Region 11 comprises Davao Oriental, Compostela Valley, Davao del Sur and Davao del Norte.

Third region

In a phone interview, Defensor explained why he was considering CAR as the third region where logging would be allowed.

"Zamboanga and the CAR have about the same potential for reforestation and CAR is located in Luzon. We're thinking, 'Why would we open up Zamboanga if we can do it in CAR?' We're still studying everything," he said.

Both the CAR and Zamboanga have about 50,000 hectares of forests covered by logging permits. Defensor said the major consideration now would be which area could be managed more effectively if the log ban were lifted.

The DENR will announce its choice of a third region next week.

The CAR comprises Abra, Apayao, Benguet, Ifugao, Kalinga and Mountain Province, while Region 9 consists of Zamboanga del Norte, Zamboanga del Sur and Zamboanga Sibugay.

Defensor, who flew to Mindanao yesterday to inspect 5,000 logs seized by the DENR, signed the memorandum lifting the log ban in Agusan del Sur.

Second-growth

He said logging would be allowed only in second-growth forests and plantations in the three regions, and only in private plantations in the rest of the country.

The environment secretary said this limited logging scheme would compel wood consumers to plant the trees they needed instead of relying on large-scale commercial logging.

"We want to encourage private plantations. Those who need wood should plant trees," he said.

With a forest cover of 7.2 million hectares, the Philippines still has a potential for reforestation of around 5 million-ha. However, only 400,000-ha have been planted through private initiatives.

Furniture makers pleased

The DENR decision to consider lifting the log ban in the CAR pleased the Chamber of Furniture Industries of the Philippines, which has been asking the government to consider the plight of the wood-based small and micro enterprises (SMEs) outside the three regions.

The SMEs account for about 80 percent of the 12,500 furniture-makers all over the country. Many of them are located in areas such as Cagayan Valley, where raw materials had been so accessible before the log ban.

The CFIP has complained that the prices of local lumber have gone up by as much as 55 percent since last December, when the government imposed the total log ban.

Mahogany prices have increased from P38 per board foot before the ban to P55; gmelina, from P28 to P33; and plywood, from P35 per square foot to P40, the CFIP said in a statement.

Prelude

The militant fisherfolk group Pamalakaya said the DENR move was a prelude to the lifting of the total log ban in the 14 other regions.

"We knew it from the very start. This total log ban called by Malacañang last year was only meant for publicity and PR-related campaigns to offset public outrage and shift public opinion in favor of the DENR and the Office of the President," Pamalakaya information officer Gerry Albert Corpuz said in a statement.

"Defensor and President Macapagal-Arroyo should be held responsible if a repeat of last year's tragedy in Aurora and northern Quezon happens in Regions 11 and Caraga," he said.

Environmental groups said the new logging scheme showed the government's lack of interest and political will in protecting the country's forests.

Greenpeace and Haribon maintained that only a total commercial log ban would save the country's remaining 20-percent forest cover.

"Of course, the government will allow logging in areas where there are still forests. What this signals is that the government is not into protecting our natural forests," Von Hernandez, Greenpeace campaigns director for Southeast Asia, said in a phone interview.

Business as usual

Hernandez said the new scheme limiting logging operations to three regions was actually nothing new.

"It's business as usual. The new scheme is basically just a continuation of the old scheme. Only now, logging is more focused on pockets of forests in the regions," Hernandez said.

Haribon executive director Anabelle Plantilla said the country needed a 45-percent forest cover to regulate the ecological processes, or more than twice the existing forest cover.

"Whatever we have left, just leave it alone. We need to bite the bullet at some point," Plantilla said, adding that the government should instead push for plantations.

"Why can't they establish more tree plantations? If they had started planting before the law was passed, the trees should have been grown by now," she said.

She expressed concern that the government would expand logging operations to other regions when the forests of Mindanao had been consumed. Plantilla recalled that the Visayas had the least forest cover left because its natural resources were the first to be exploited for commercial purposes.

Both groups said they would not waver in their advocacy for a total commercial log ban.

Assurance

Defensor assured critics that the government would not expand the lifting of the log ban to the rest of the country.

"They have our assurance. There will be no other regions but those that can compensate the wood requirement," he said.

He said the logging operations would be limited to only three regions that have the capacity to supply the local wood requirement of 3 million cubic meters.

This requirement can be supplied by 1.5 million to 2 million-ha of forest, according to a study by the Asian Development Bank often cited by the DENR.

Region 11 has 100,000-ha of forest land covered by logging permits, while Caraga has 150,000-ha. This would expand as logging resumes, Defensor said.

Evaresto Narvajes, president of Philippine Wood Industries Inc., expressed gratitude to Ms Arroyo for lifting the ban.

"That's very good news for Mindanao, for the workers," Narvajes said.

He said the three-month log ban had caused dislocation in the wood industry. "I hope the President will be convinced to lift the same in all areas."

Illegal logging

But Bishop Nereo Odchimar of the Diocese of Surigao del Sur said that despite the President's order, the Church would continue its fight against illegal logging in the province.

Odchimar said logging concessions were using their timber licenses as fronts for illegal logging activities.

On Friday, tensions ran high in the province after church people and several groups blocked the gates of logging firm Surigao Development Corp. (Sudercor) in Lanuza, Surigao del Sur.

In Davao City, Rex Linao, co-convenor of the Panaghoy sa Kinaiyahan-Coalition for Mother Earth, said the government should protect the remaining trees still standing in Mindanao.

"It's good to remind Secretary Mike Defensor that for decades, the government has always favored the interest of the food and furniture industry players," Linao said.

"They're saying that there are still trees left in the regions. Do they have data to prove that 54 percent of the forested area of the country's logging areas still meet ecological balance?" he asked.

With reports from Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau; and Franklin A. Caliguid and Germelina Lacorte, PDI Mindanao Bureau

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SUPREME COURT DOCTRINES

CIVIL LAW (OBLIGATIONS AND CONTRACTS)—Novation—Novation is the extinguishment of an obligation by the substitution or change of the obligation by a subsequent one which extinguishes or modifies the first, either by changing the object or principal conditions, or, by substituting another in place of the debtor, or by subrogating a third person in the rights of the creditor. In order for novation to take place, the concurrence of the following requisites is indispensable: 1. there must be a previous valid obligation, 2. there must be an agreement of the parties concerned to a new contract, 3. there must be the extinguishment of the old contract, and 4. there must be the validity of the new contract. All these requisites are patently lacking in this case. There is no new obligation that supposedly novated the promissory notes or the real estate mortgage, or a pre-existing obligation that was novated by the promissory notes and the real estate mortgage. [Citations omitted.] [Justice Austria-Martinez, Second Division, Azolla Farms vs Court of Appeals, G. R. No. 138085, November 11, 2004]

BY R. B. VERA

Bank says cost of living to rise with VAT increase

From page A1

banking giant UBS.

"We think the government's initial revenue-generating efforts would affect low-income groups," UBS said in its February report.

"While we realize the urgency of the government's revenue measures, we also believe that these are coming at a time when inflation and utility expenses are rising," the Swiss bank said.

The bank expects the cost of living for a family of six to rise by 9 percent from P539 a day last year to P588 a day this year with the increase in the VAT rate from 10 percent to 12 percent, the rise in Napocor rates by 98 centavos per kilowatt-hour, and the 52 percent increase in water rates.

Its projections were based on an inflation rate of 6 percent this year. The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas forecasted that the VAT rate increase would add 1.7 percent to commodity prices.

UBS' projected cost of living is nearly double the existing P300 minimum wage in Metro Manila. (Many establishments, however, are paying workers an amount below the minimum wage.)

Income not enough

This means that about one out of every two Filipino households would have to borrow P288 a day this year (up 20 percent from P239 last year) just to make it through the day. The National Statistics Office reported that 46 percent of the 14 million households in the country were earning less than P80,000 a year.

The minimum wage is not even enough to cover a typical household's food expenses (55 percent), which UBS expects to jump by 7.7 percent to P321 a day from P298 last year.

With the pending rate increase petitions of power and water utilities, UBS expects utility expenses (9 percent of budget) to jump by 20 percent to P60 a day this year from P50 last year.

Of the utility expenses, 50 percent is accounted for by electricity, 20 percent by water and 30 percent by fuel.

UBS noted that even before the tax and utility rate hikes had been approved, "the minimum wage income bracket and below are already experiencing tight budgets."

Hit hard

Minimum wage earners have been hit hard by the government's tax reforms because they account for 20 percent to 30 percent of the demand in heavily taxed sectors, according to the Swiss bank.

UBS cited other cost pressures exacting a heavy toll on the masses such as higher inflation as a result of surging oil prices and higher government service cost due to the toll rate hikes.

The bank saw no relief for minimum wage earners because their demand for a pay increase of P125 a day would meet stiff resistance from "corporations that are already bearing the burden of rising production costs and weaker pricing power."

With its negative outlook on consumer demand this year, UBS said retail and consumer manufacturing and even the telecommunications sectors could be affected.

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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Tuesday, March 8, 2005
4th Week of Lent

1st Reading: Ezk 47:1-9,12
Gospel: John 5:1-3,5-16

There was a feast of the Jews and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now, by the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem, there is a pool (called Bethzatha in Hebrew) surrounded by five galleries. In these galleries lay a multitude of sick people—blind, lame and paralyzed.

There was a man who had been sick for thirty-eight years. Jesus saw him, and since he knew how long this man had been lying there, he said to him, "Do you want to be healed?" And the sick man answered, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is disturbed; so while I am still on my way, another steps down before me."

Jesus then said to him, "Stand up, take your mat and walk." And at once the man was healed, and he took up his mat and walked.

Now that day happened to be the Sabbath. So the Jews said to the man who had just been healed, "It is the Sabbath and the Law doesn't allow you to carry your mat." He answered them, "The one who healed me said to me: Take up your mat and walk." They asked him, "Who is the one who said to you: Take up your mat and walk?" But the sick man had no idea who it was who had cured him, for Jesus had slipped away among the crowd that filled the place.

Afterwards Jesus met him in the Temple court and told him, "Now you are well; don't sin again, lest something worse happen to you." And the man went back and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. So the Jews persecuted Jesus because he performed healings like that on the Sabbath.

Commentary

Jesus is in the Temple for a feast and sees so many seeking healing by a pool that was thought to be visited by an angel that stirred the waters. Jesus heals a man who has been there for thirty-eight years (almost forty-lifetime, sojourn in the desert, lent) and the man doesn't want to be healed! Jesus healed on the Sabbath and the man reports him to the temple officials, though he doesn't know Jesus' name. Jesus seeks him out (this is the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem) and warns him not to sin again—and this time the man knowingly goes and reports Jesus to the officials. Just because we have known the forgiveness of God, even been healed miraculously doesn't mean that we know Jesus at all. Jesus cannot abide disease and suffering in the world and his very presence heals. How do we repay the goodness of God to us so often? Jesus, are you saddened at what we do to one another? Do we need to hear your words again: Now you are well; don't sin again, lest something worse happens to you? Don't let something worse—that we might lose your grace within us—happen to us.

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Ex-Pagcor chief says Erap tried to end 'jueteng'

By Nelson F. Flores
and Juliet Labog-Javellana

FORMER Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. chair Alice Reyes said ousted President Joseph Estrada had tried to end *jueteng* operations in the country through the Bingo 2-Ball game in 2000 but failed.

Reyes testified yesterday as the 21st defense witness in the plunder case against Estrada at the Sandiganbayan.

Reyes said it was Charlie "Atong" Ang, a known Estrada crony, who broached the idea of putting up Bingo 2-Ball to Pagcor in 2000.

She said the idea was approved by the gaming agency on condition that it underwent a two-month trial to determine its feasibility.

When informed about this, Reyes said, Estrada directed Pagcor to study the matter thoroughly because it could be the way to end *jueteng*, an illegal numbers game. She said Estrada in no way had tried to influence Pagcor.

Ironically, it was Estrada himself who stopped the operation of Bingo 2-Ball 20 days after it started because of questions on its legality and mounting criticism against it.

Reyes said at least 35 individuals, including Bong Pineda, an alleged *jueteng* operator in Central Luzon, met with her and applied for Bingo 2-Ball franchises.

She said the applicants, whom she described as "numbers game experts," were brought in by Ang.

According to Reyes, Ang told her Ilocos Sur Gov. Luis "Chavit" Singson did not come to the meeting because he was opposed to Bingo 2-Ball. She said the franchise for Ilocos Sur was then given to Singson's brother, cousin and nephew.

When asked how Bingo 2-Ball was played, Reyes conceded that it was similar to *jueteng*, except that the drawing of the numbers was done in public and there were no "under the table" payments.

She said the main beneficiaries of Bingo 2-Ball were to be the Philippine National Police and the *jueteng* collectors who were to be employed by Pagcor.

Estrada through his spokesperson, former Maguindanao Rep. Didagen Dilangalen, said Reyes' testimony clearly showed he had nothing to do with *jueteng* operations in the country. Otherwise, he said, why would he want "the goose that lays the golden egg dead?"

But Special Government Prosecutor Dennis Villa-Ignacio said Reyes' testimony showed the detained President had a hand in *jueteng* operations since it was his friend Ang and other known *jueteng* operators who were pushing for Bingo 2-Ball.

Estrada's senator-son, meanwhile, who is facing plunder charges along with him, yesterday took the Senate floor to denounce the "unscrupulous and institutionalized corruption" being perpetrated by Pagcor with its unbridled operation of slot machines.

Sen. Jinggoy Estrada said he was not against gambling but was denouncing Pagcor's joint venture agreements with private investors operating slot machine arcades in violation of the Pagcor charter. He said the private operators made as much as P2 billion a year under a 60-40 sharing scheme.

"Mr. President, what this government proclaims today as a strong republic is really a bankrupt republic, debt-ridden, a republic suffering not only from a financial crisis, but from a moral crisis, and a crisis of credibility and integrity," the younger Estrada said in a privilege speech.

UP meet to discuss fight vs corruption

TO ASSESS how the country is faring in the fight against corruption, the National College of Public Administration and Governance (NCPAG) of the University of the Philippines, in collaboration with the Philippine Society for Public Administration (PSPA), will hold the 6th Diliman Governance Forum on March 16 at the NCPAG Assembly Hall in Quezon City.

With the theme, "Combating Corruption: Plundering Our Chances, or Doing It Better?", the forum will have as resource speakers Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo, anticorruption czar Merceditas Gutierrez and Rev. Archbishop Edwin Marcelo of the San Carlos Seminary.

Marcelo will talk on "Status, Challenges and Prospects," while Archbishop Marcelo will discuss "Assessment from a Distance."

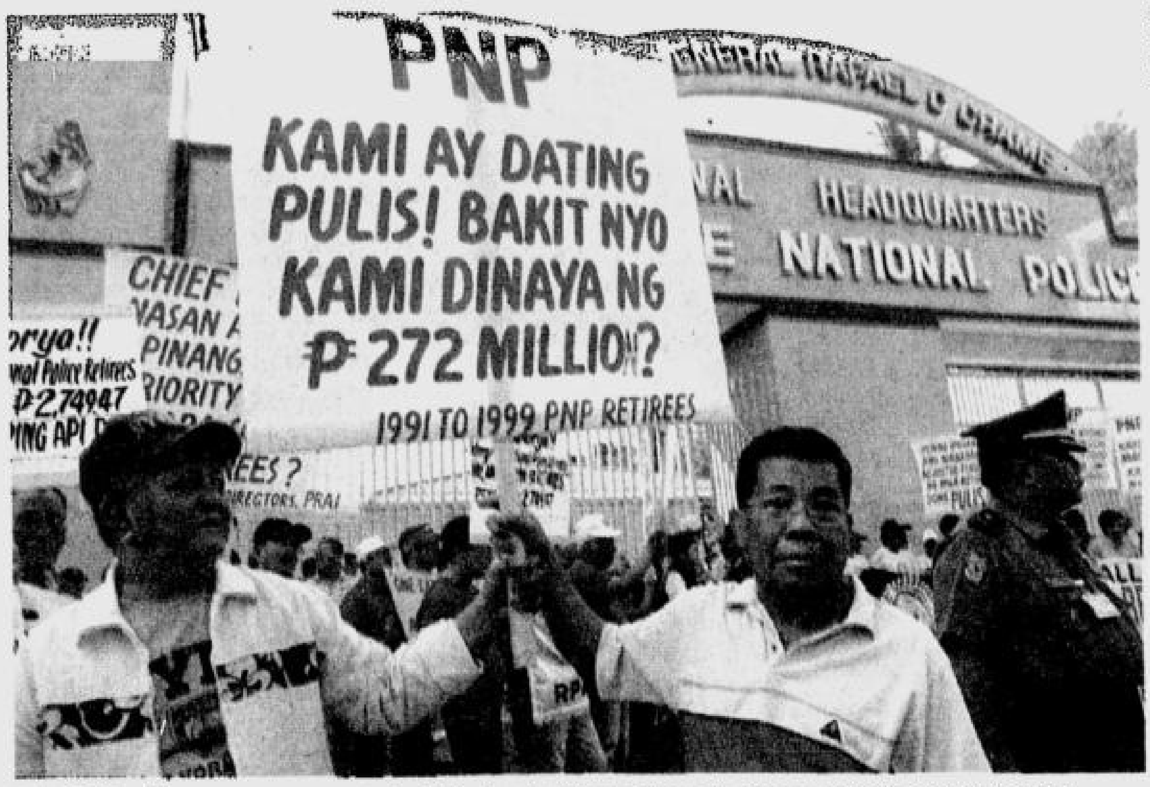
"The forum seeks to promote enlightenment, critical review, informed decision and resolution of the problem of corruption," said NCPAG Dean Alex Brillantes.

"We want to hear from different sectors what is being done, what progress has been made and what strategic measures should be supported," Brillantes said.

The panel of reactors will include Sheila Coronel of the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, representing the media, and Executive Director Paul Dominic Badilla of the National Youth Commission, representing the youth sector.

Civil society will be represented by Ermin Garcia Jr. of the Sinag ng Bayan Foundation, the antigraft group behind the People's Crusade for Good Governance. Dr. Jose Abueva, professor emeritus and former president of UP, will provide the perspective of the academe.

The forum, which is open to the public, is co-sponsored by the British Council, University of Manchester, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and graduate students under Dr. Maria Fe Mendoza.


PNP
KAMI AY DATING PULIS! BAKIT NYO KAMI DINAYA NG ₱ 272 MILLION?
1991 TO 1999 PNP RETIREES
HEADQUARTERS
NATIONAL POLICE

RETIRED policemen stage a protest rally in front of Camp Crame in Quezon City to ask for their full retirement package.

'Old cops never die, they just protest'

By Luige A. del Puerto

IT TOOK a protest action by hundreds of old graying men for the Philippine National Police leadership to finally heed the pleas of the police retirees.

Hours after they staged a rally at the gates of Camp Crame, PNP Director General Edgar Aglipay agreed to their demands.

The retired cops had received only 80 percent of an increase in their pensions approved in 2000 and were demanding the release of the balance of 20 percent at least for the year 2000.

The unpaid balance for 2000 alone totaled P43 million.

"They need not worry," Aglipay told reporters, saying the PNP could meet their demand as a result of financial policies adopted last year.

Aglipay did not say when the retirees would actually start receiving the money.

Believing they had run out of options, the retirees took to the streets to press their demands.

Besides visibly graying, some seemed to have trouble just standing up.

They said they were forced to protest after repeated appeals to government officials fell on deaf ears.

"We have already served the government," said former Makati cop Benigno Ramos, 68, who joined the service in 1972 and retired in 1994.

"The government owes us that money. After many years, we are still waiting," he said.

Under the law, an increase in pensions should follow any increase in the salaries of active police members. Active policemen had a salary increase spread out in three increments in 2000, 2001 and 2002.

Just a stone's throw away from the protesting old men, the blue facade of PNP headquarters glistened in the sun.

Some retired officials pointed to the renovation of the building at a cost of P5 million as an example of how the government, the PNP in particular, had neglected them.

"While they can renovate that building, the retirees are still waiting to get what is due them," a protester said.

Retired Police Deputy Director General Guillermo Domondon said the police leadership promised to pay them the remaining 20 percent starting July.

In an earlier interview, Domondon lamented that while the government could automatically afford to set aside one-third of the national budget for debt servicing, it could not even pay up its own citizens.

"The government owes us this. Why can't they pay us first?" he said. "Why is there automatic appropriation for debt servicing? Why?"

Retired Senior Supt. Julio Tuazon, president of the Association of Retired Law Enforcers of the Philippines (Arlep) in Camarines Sur, said his organization decided to join the rally so that their demands would be heard.

He said the restiveness of the retirees had been fueled by the continuing decline in the value of the pensions they had been receiving.

With a report from Juan Escandor Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

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Malaysia to speed up return of Filipino workers

From page A1

migration dragnet.

The meeting was attended by a Malaysian delegation headed by Home Affairs Secretary General Che Mat.

The Filipino panel was headed by Foreign Undersecretary Jose Brillantes.

The group was largely seen as a mechanism to avoid a repeat of Malaysia's 2002 immigration crackdown, which was marked by alleged human rights abuses committed during a massive expulsion of Filipinos.

Orderly repatriation

"As close Asean (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) partners, the two sides expressed their commitment to closely coordinate with each other in ensuring a smooth repatriation process and in facilitating the return of legitimate workers to Malaysia," the DFA said in a statement.

"Malaysia expressed its willingness to address the complaints of Filipino repatriates," it added.

"We've formalized the safe, orderly and humane repatriation of undocumented Filipinos," Brillantes told reporters.

"We've avoided 2002," he said.

Papers ready in 3 days

On the processing centers, he said that per the labor department's reckoning, an applicant could have his or her working papers completed in three days.

Less than 48 hours after the March 1 crackdown began, 216 Filipinos were arrested in Sandaka in Sabah, according to the DFA.

The department has since stopped giving updated figures.

At yesterday's meeting, the Philippine panel expressed "deep appreciation to Malaysia for being a gracious and generous host to Filipino workers," the department said.

Malaysia, on the other hand, "acknowledged the contribution of Filipino workers in the development of (that) country."

No cutbacks on demand

As the two panels met, about 30 members of workers' groups picketed the Malaysian Embassy to protest the crackdown on undocumented workers.

The labor department said the deployment of overseas workers would not be adversely affected despite the Malaysian crackdown on illegals and next week's implementation of new Japanese visa rules for performing artists.

Labor Undersecretary Manuel Imson said there was "continued preference for [Filipino] skills and services not only in Japan and Malaysia but in other host countries worldwide."

Markets not lost

Imson said Japan was expected to continue accepting legitimate Filipino performing artists consistent with the new testing and certification procedures in the Philippines.

"Let it be clear that we're not in any way losing these two host countries as they're even set to accept skilled and documented OFWs needed by their economies," he told reporters.

The new Japanese immigration guidelines for entertainers—which require two years schooling or training—start on March 15.

MUSLIM women rally in front of the Malaysian Embassy in Makati City to protest the crackdown on undocumented migrant workers in Malaysia.

ERIK ARAZAS

Church stand abetting abortion, solons charge

From page A1

We cannot wait for centuries before we legislate a policy on reproductive health. Our duty to God, to country and to families, especially to our women and children, is our utmost priority," it added.

The group includes Senators Juan Flavier, Manuel Roxas II and Edgardo Angara, and Representatives Edcel Lagman, Loretta Ann Rosales, Jose Salceda, Satur Ocampo, Teodoro Locsin Jr., Agapito Aquino, Darlene Antonino-Custodio, Gilbert Remulla and Imee Marcos.

The influential Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines said the lawmakers were keen on pushing HB 3773 because they had a "hidden agenda."

According to the CBCP president, Davao Archbishop Fernando Capalla, outside groups were lobbying for the passage of the bill.

"(They) provide the money, there's an outside control," he told reporters. "All this is being done in terms of business."

Asked who these groups were, Capalla pointed to foreigners purportedly funding the population management campaign to pave the way for companies that manufacture condoms and other contraceptives.

"They better consult those who understand these bills and their implications," Caloocan Bishop Deogracias Iñiguez told the INQUIRER in a text message. "We appeal to everyone, even in the Church, to keep an open mind to the truth and ethical norms."

Unwanted pregnancies

The PLCPD said HB 3773 would actually help prevent abortions caused by unplanned pregnancies by providing basic reproductive health needs.

Citing results of the 2003 National Demographic and Health Survey conducted by the National Statistics Office, the group said 1,096 abortions happened each day due to unwanted and unplanned pregnancies.

The PLCPD said about 400,000 abortions each year were unsafe, with one in six pregnancies ending in induced abortions.

Post-abortion complications comprised 10 percent of OB-Gyne admissions in a year, it said. Worse, 12 percent of maternal deaths were due to such complications, making abortion the fourth leading cause of maternal death in the country, it added.

Ten mothers die daily due to complications from pregnancy and childbirth, 16 women are abused physically and socially, and 12 children are sexually molested and exploited because they are not informed on sexuality and sexual relations, the PLCPD said.

It said that for every 1,000 deliveries, 17 babies would not survive before they were born, 29 would not celebrate their first birthday, and 42 would not reach age 5 after succumbing to treatable diseases.

Woman's right

"The Catholic Church hierarchy could send their flock to the streets to echo the mantras they want them to say. But this will not save the lives of mothers and infants dying because of the lack of reproductive health programs and services," the PLCPD said.

The group said the law would help resolve or lessen maternal health problems by:

- Providing full access to adequate and relevant information and services on reproductive health.
- Protecting and promoting the right of women to control their own fertility.
- Guaranteeing that adolescents are given age-specific education on reproductive health, including sexuality.

The Church is against HB 3773, saying it would promote abortion. On Friday, it mounted a huge rally against the bill in Manila.

The PLCPD disputed the Church's claim, citing the bill which stated that abortion would remain a crime.

"While the full range of family planning methods, techniques and devices shall be made available to couples and adults of reproductive age, abortion shall remain to be penalized under the Revised Penal Code and relevant jurisprudence," the bill said.

The committee added: "Moreover, the definition of family planning excludes abortion as one of the methods."

Pregnancy a crime?

Capalla also spoke out against the health department's "Ligtas Buntis" program.

"The name itself suggests it's a crime to get pregnant," he said. "Do you have to save people from getting pregnant?"

Capalla said he was not buying the DOH position that its program was only meant to prevent maternal and child deaths.

"How do you do that? Through contraception?" he asked. "The end does not justify the means."

Anne Masbad, leader of the Church-backed group Couples for Christ in Kidapawan City, said the DOH campaign gave a negative impression.

"I am very afraid of it ... and alarmed. It is like telling the public that the government is out there saving women from a dreaded disease—and this time it is pregnancy," she said.

Masbad noted that in the past, the health department would push a disease preventive program, such as the "Ligtas Tigdas" for children. "It is very negative ... It is like, women are prevented from getting pregnant," she said.

Freedom to choose

According to Health Secretary Manuel Dayrit, Ligtas Buntis is not about population management.

"It's about freedom to raise a family ... it's about safe pregnancy. Essentially, it's about keeping women and children alive and healthy," he said Friday during a visit to Kidapawan to promote the program.

Through Ligtas Buntis, the government would be able to prevent deaths of mothers and infants, abortions, early pregnancies, unwanted pregnancies and premature pregnancies, he said.

Many unplanned pregnancies end in abortions, Dayrit said.

"Of 1,000 live births, how many are unplanned, unwanted, or undesired? What the DOH wants to do is to prevent these types of pregnancies so we would keep women and children safe," he said.

A health official in North Cotabato said Ligtas Buntis was not only about family planning and responsible parenthood but also about "having a choice."

Sex education

Dayrit also stressed the need for teenagers to get the right information about their own reproductive system and about sex as a whole.

"It's not just sex education per se, it's about teaching the young to value education on sexuality. It's also about commitment and responsibility," he said.

What the CBCP does not approve of is the fact that health workers promote the Ligtas Buntis program in the villages by distributing contraceptives, like condoms and pills, which the Church considers antilife.

Because of this, the DOH continues to dialogue with Church officials. *With a report from Jeffrey M. Tupas, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

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US military shows ...

From page A1

Annual RP-US military exercises are normally about training against Moro and communist rebels, but this year the emphasis is on healing the scars of natural disasters and poverty.

The operations mirrored those in Afghanistan and tsunami-hit Indonesia, where the US adversary in the battle for hearts and minds is Islamic militancy.

An older opponent is in the US military's sights in the Philippines, where poverty and corruption have fueled Asia's oldest communist insurgency.

Residents of northern Laguna province turn shy when asked about the rebels camped out in the surrounding hills, referring to them as "our friends" or "brothers."

But Crystal Coroza, a mother of two, was happy to see Filipino and American soldiers pouring tons of earth on a narrow, potholed road in Luisiana town.

"We're glad they are improving the road," she said. "Since we moved in here 20 years ago, we've had to endure walking for hours because there's no available transportation due to thick layers of mud and deep watery holes."

Hearts and minds

In the nearby town of Siniloan, Filipino and American doctors pulled out about 500 decayed teeth and handed out vitamins and antibiotics to more than 2,000 residents.

They transformed a school into a field hospital as dozens of nervous boys lay down on desks to be circumcised.

"We took advantage of the situation because the hospital is far from here and we have to pay for minor surgery," Rosa Marquez said as she lined up for antibiotics for her circumcised 10-year-old son.

About 300 American troops have been helping 650 Filipino soldiers provide aid in areas of Laguna and Quezon provinces which were hit by storms and devastating mudslides late last year.

Tsunami relief around the Indian Ocean and other military commitments forced Washington to cut back the annual "Balikatan" (shoulder-to-shoulder) exercises, which usually involve thousands of troops.

The humanitarian efforts also coincided with efforts by the United States to polish its public relations, which President George W. Bush acknowledged recently had been poor compared with those of its adversaries.

"They need that softer touch," said security analyst Rex Robles, a retired Philippine Navy officer. "In any counterterrorism strategy, building an image is always a key component. It's like draining the pond of water to catch the fish."

The Philippines has a long history with the United States, starting as a colony sold to Washington by the Spanish in 1898. US forces returned to oust the Japanese toward the end of World War II and then made heavy use of Philippine naval and air bases from the beginning of the Cold War until 1992.

Manila is an ally in the US-led war on terror, with its troops getting regular training and advice.

Communist threats

Some of the American troops are second-generation Filipino-Americans and are able to talk to locals in Filipino. Many considered the exercises as a way of getting back to their roots.

"The last time I was in the Philippines was when I was 5 years old," said Marilyn Macalos, a US Army captain with the 25th Infantry Division, who was handing out pairs of glasses and bottles of eye drops to elderly residents.

"It feels good serving people in my parents' homeland," she added.

Since Valentine's Day, American soldiers have been building two school buildings in Luisiana to meet a three-week deadline, ignoring threats from communist New People's Army rebels operating in the surrounding mountains.

"We're not worried," said Sgt. John Goerge of the 142nd Combat Engineer Battalion. "We feel 100 percent safe."

Goerge and his men saw much worse during a 14-month stint in Iraq that ended last year, where they repaired schools and hospitals damaged by fighting.

Communist rebels, who have been waging an insurgency since 1969 in which at least 40,000 have been killed, had warned American troops against entering their areas during the exercises.

NPA guerrillas killed 10 Filipino soldiers in an ambush during last year's floods. The government said the troops had been bringing relief to stranded villages.

The Philippine military has been monitoring rebel movements in Laguna, parts of which are known NPA strongholds, but the rebels have yet to carry out any attacks.

While the rebels have support around Luisiana and in pockets throughout the country, protests against the American presence have been muted. For many residents affected by the floods, American soldiers are welcome extra hands in the rebuilding.

"The local community is very supportive," said Lt. Renoir Huevos, head of the Philippine Navy engineering team. "They will not allow these projects to be sabotaged because these projects are for them." *Reuters*

Damascus, Beirut hold summit on Lebanon pullout

DAMASCUS—Syria's President Bashar al-Assad and Lebanese counterpart Emile Lahoud were to hold a summit in Damascus on Monday to mark the start of a pullback of Syrian troops in its tiny neighbor.

Lebanon's outgoing Defense Minister Abdel Rahim Mrad said Sunday that the Syrian military would start the much-awaited troop redeployment to the Bekaa Valley of eastern Lebanon after the summit.

A Lebanese presidential spokesperson said the meeting of the Syrian-Lebanese Supreme Council, with Lebanon's outgoing premier, Omar Karameh, and parliamentary speaker Nabih Berri also taking part, was due to start at midday (9 p.m. in Manila).

On Saturday, Assad whose country has been under international pressure to pull out of Lebanon, told parliament in Damascus that Syria's 14,000 troops in Lebanon would redeploy to the Syrian border.

"As an extension of measures already taken... we will withdraw our forces stationed in Lebanon to the Bekaa Valley and then to the border" with Syria, Assad said.

He said the supreme council would "approve the withdrawal plan and then we will have fulfilled our obligations under the Taef accord and under (UN Security Council) Resolution 1559." The troops entered Lebanon in 1976 to try to restore peace during that country's 15-year long civil war which finally ended in 1990 under the Taef agreement.

This provided for a phased redeployment of the Syrian forces but set no timetable, leaving it to agreement between Beirut and Damascus. In a series of redeployments, Syrian troop numbers have fallen from a maximum of 40,000 to 14,000.

The Syrian president has not made clear whether the troops would cross over into Syria once they had reached the border, prompting calls from Washington and Paris for an unambiguous pledge for an immediate and full withdrawal.

The United States said it would keep up the pressure for a complete Syrian withdrawal in line with Resolution 1559, which was passed last September.

The offer made so far by Assad was "half-hearted" and in "complete contradiction" to the Security Council resolution, White House director of communications Dan Bartlett said Sunday.

He urged the Syrian government "to withdraw its troops and, more importantly, or just as importantly, withdraw its security secret services as well."

French Foreign Minister Michel Barnier said Assad's pledge was important but warned that" we expect to see precise and concrete acts."

British Foreign Secretary Jack Straw welcomed Syria's pledge to withdraw its troops in Lebanon to the border but called it a "first step" that should take place as soon as possible.

However, Sheikh Hassan Nasrallah, head of Lebanon's Shiite movement Hezbollah, said Sunday after a meeting of pro-Syrian groups that they opposed an immediate withdrawal as Lebanon was still in a "state of war" with Israel.

Since the assassination in a Beirut bomb blast of former Lebanese premier Rafiq Hariri last month, Washington and Paris have led the international campaign against Damascus' presence in Lebanon.

Syria and its Lebanese allies have been widely blamed for Hariri's murder, and mass public protests have already forced the resignation of the pro-Syrian Beirut government.

Assad, in an interview with Time magazine released Sunday, insisted he should not be compared to Iraq's ousted president Saddam Hussein and said that he wanted to cooperate with international demands. *AFP*

Pope silent but appears alert

VATICAN CITY—The Vatican was set to provide its latest assessment of Pope John Paul II's medical condition on Monday amid expectations that doctors are preparing to announce a date by which he will be discharged from hospital.

The Pope made his latest brief appearance at the window of his suite at Rome's Gemelli hospital on Sunday, during which he waved to pilgrims below and made the sign of the cross.

However, the fact that the 84-year-old leader of the Catholic Church did not attempt to speak in public will temper optimistic rumors which circulated late last week that he could be allowed to return to the Vatican sometime this week.

John Paul II, whom the Vatican says is undergoing twice-daily therapy for his voice and breathing after a throat operation on Feb. 24, appeared alert during his three-minute appearance Sunday.

It gave Vatican watchers little on which to base their assessments of the Pope's condition in advance of the official Vatican line on Monday.

"Well, serene," is how Cardinal Camillo Ruini described his condition after meeting him on Saturday. "I can say to all that the news, as always, is positive," said Ruini, the president of the Italian bishops' conference.

The world's one billion Roman Catholics are hoping John Paul II will at least be back at the Vatican in time for Easter Holy Week, when Christians mark the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ.

The ceremonies, which are the most gruelling in the Church calendar, would pose the first major test of the Pope's state of health, after his recent double-hospitalization.

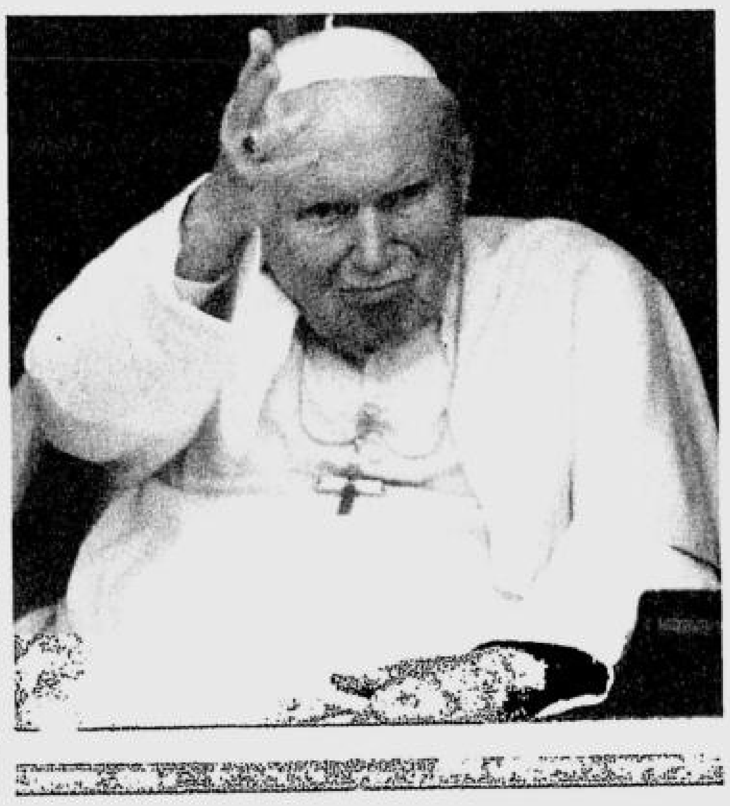
Apart from the lengthy ceremonies, which have noticeably sapped the energy of a body which has increasingly succumbed to the ravages of Parkinson's disease, Easter is also the occasion for John Paul II's traditional "Urbi et Orbi" (to the city and the world) message from his balcony.

In Sunday's message read out by an aide to several thousand pilgrims and tourists in St. Peter's Square, the Pope thanked believers in other faiths, especially Jews and Muslims, for their prayers for his recovery.

"I want to express special recognition of the closeness of believers of other religions, particularly Jews and Muslims.

"Some of them wanted to come and pray here at the hospital. And that for me is a comforting sign, for which I thank God."

Four big screens had been erected around the Vatican square, a few kilometers from the hospital, allowing pilgrims to see the Pope, hunched in his wheelchair, following proceedings as Archbishop Leonardo Sandri performed the traditional Angelus prayer in his name. *AFP*



POPE John Paul II waves to the faithful as he appears at the end of the traditional Angelus prayer at a window of his apartment on the 10th floor of Rome's Gemelli Polyclinic Hospital March 6, where he is hospitalized after undergoing surgery to ease his breathing. AP

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Ex-hostage says she may have been US target

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ROME—The Italian journalist wounded by US troops shortly after the end of her month-long kidnap ordeal fanned a growing diplomatic rift between Rome and Washington on Sunday by suggesting the US soldiers deliberately tried to kill her.

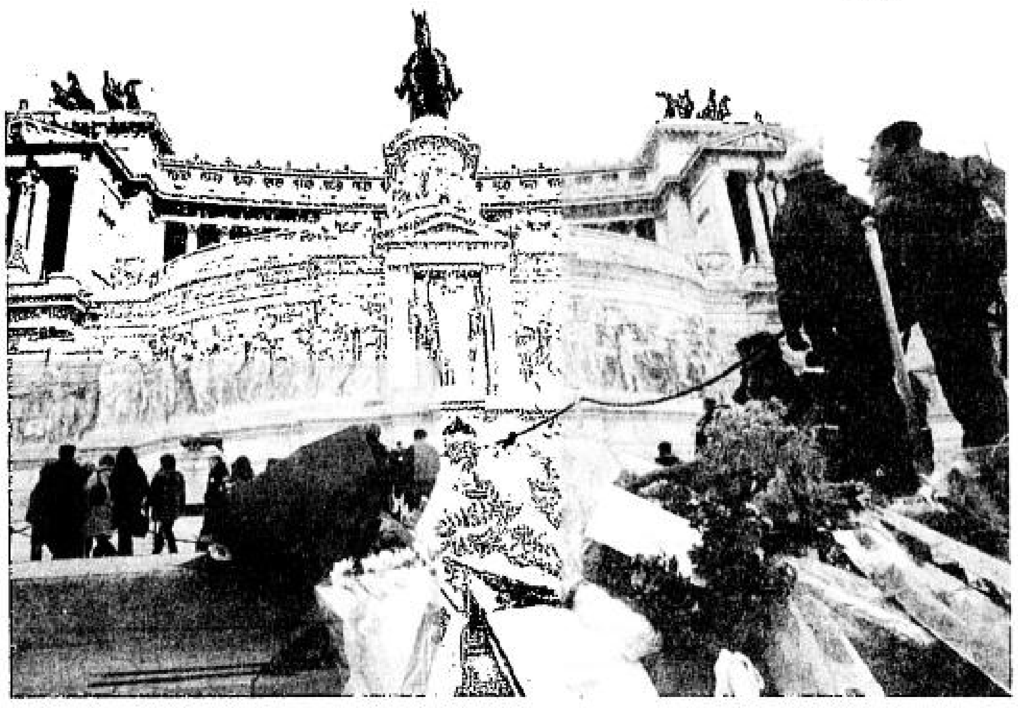
Giuliana Sgrena, wounded when the convoy taking her to safety was riddled by US fire near Baghdad airport on Friday, said she may have been a target because the Americans opposed negotiations with her kidnappers.

"Everyone knows that the Americans don't want hostages to be freed by negotiations, and for that reason, I don't see why I should rule out that I was their target," Sgrena told Sky Italia news channel on Sunday.

However initial investigations by Italian magistrates have yielded no evidence to support the allegation that US troops deliberately fired on Sgrena, the Italian news agency ANSA said Sunday.

Before delivering their final conclusions on the incident, the magistrates Franco Ionta and Pietro Saviotti must hear eye witnesses testimony and receive expert analysis on the trajectory of the bullets which hit the vehicle, the agency reported citing law enforcement sources.

They will also study telephone conversations between Italian secret service agents in the vehicle with Sgrena and the government in Rome as the incident occurred.



FLOWERS lie on the steps of Rome's tomb of the Unknown Soldier where the coffin of slain Italian intelligence agent Nicola Calipari is lying in state March 6. Italy is to award a posthumous medal of valor to Calipari who was instrumental in the release of hostage Giuliana Sgrena, and then saved the reporter's life by acting as a human shield as the car was riddled with bullets by US forces. REUTERS

A senior White House official on Sunday called the shooting, in which Nicola Calipari, the Italian secret service agent who negotiated Sgrena's release lost his life protecting her from the hail of bullets, a "horrific accident."

"This is a horrific accident, on which President Bush personally called Prime Minister Berlusconi to offer his condolences, as well as to make sure that there is a full investigation, so we're able to understand the very facts that are now being discussed," White House communications director Dan Bartlett told CNN television.

Sgrena's comment comes amid fears that Friday's incident could lead to a full-scale diplomatic rift between the two allies.

"The incident could have very serious political consequences," Italy's La Stampa daily said in a front page editorial, adding that relations between the two governments had "suffered an immediate deterioration."

The US military said their forces had given ample warning to the driver of Sgrena's car, which they said was approaching at speed when they opened fire.

Sgrena said they had not been traveling fast.

US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld called his Italian counterpart Antonio Martino "to express the regret of the American administration and his personal regret" over Calipari's death, Italy's defense ministry said Sunday. *AFP*

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Jakarta, KL seek end to border row

JAKARTA—Indonesia and Malaysia said Monday they would seek a diplomatic end to a border and oil dispute even as a military-backed visit by Indonesia's president to the contested region risked stoking tensions.

As anti-Malaysian protests flared in Jakarta and fighter jets, warships and troops were deployed, Indonesia's President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and Malaysian Premier Abdullah Ahmad Badawi agreed to a foreign ministers' meeting.

"We want to settle this in a good manner... It should be settled well without falling into the trap of confrontation, especially armed confrontation," Yudhoyono said.

Claims by both countries to an area of the Sulawesi sea, near the land border between Indonesia's East Kalimantan province and Malaysia's Saba state were recently unbalanced by Kuala Lumpur's granting of oil exploration rights.

Warships from both countries have come into close contact in the area several times since Feb. 16 when energy giant Shell was given a concession in the area by Malaysia's state oil company Petronas.

Both sides have accused each other's boats and airplanes of incursions into their territories.

On Sunday, Indonesia said it was beefing up its security presence in the area, sending four F-16 fighter planes and at least seven navy ships to the region, while placing troop reinforcements in nearby North Sulawesi province.

The Royal Malaysian Navy has reportedly stationed two warships in the disputed waters to monitor the situation.

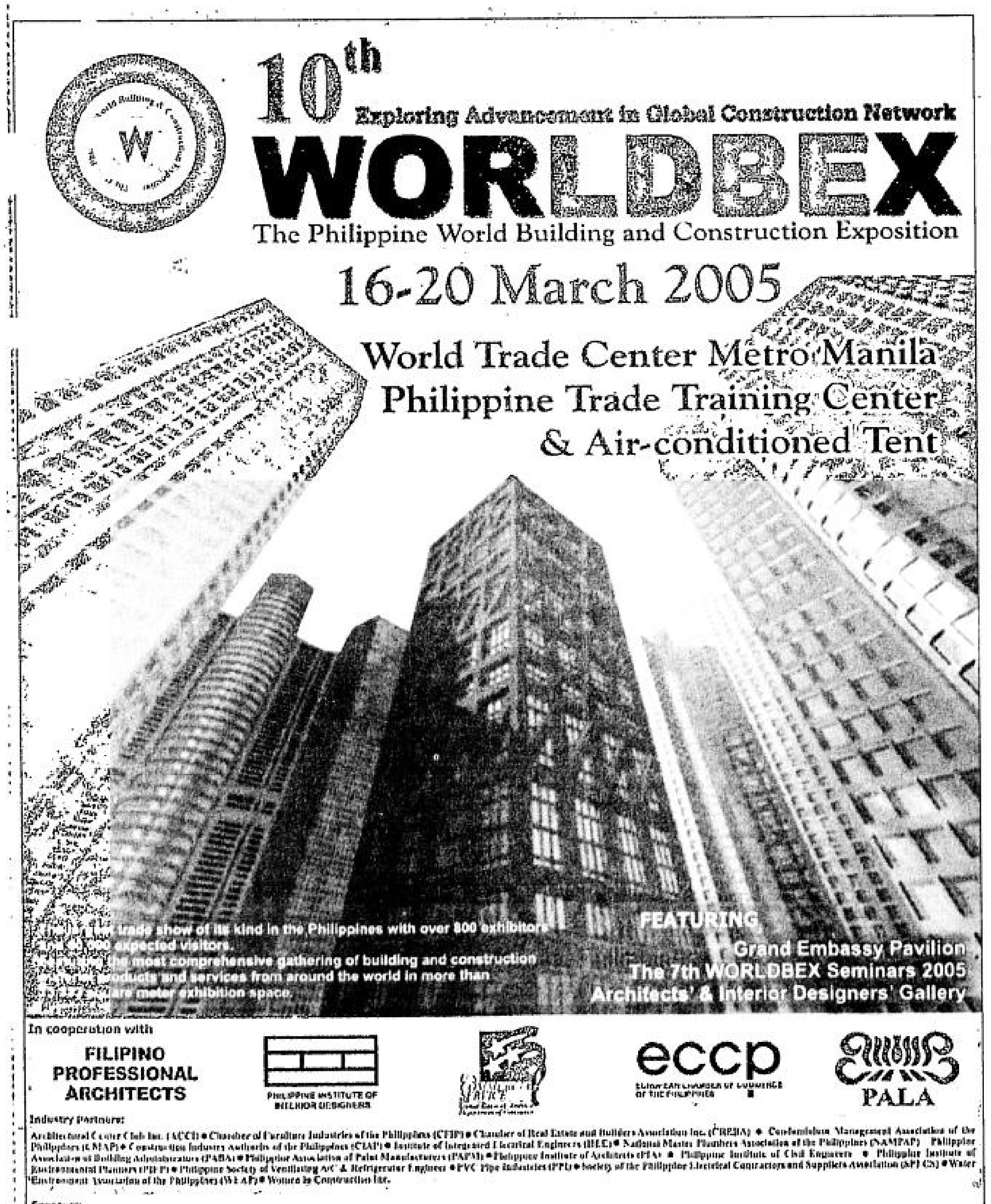
Yudhoyono was on Monday touring East Kalimantan province and was later due to visit Sebatik, an island split between Malaysia and Indonesia that is home to military garrisons belonging to both countries.

Malaysia's Abdullah confirmed he and his Indonesian counterpart had decided in a telephone conversation early Monday to assign their foreign ministers to end the row.

"To prevent any undesirable incidents which may create tension in the relationship between Indonesia and Malaysia, both of us agreed for the matter to be discussed at the diplomatic level," he said, according to Bernama news agency.

"Hopefully, in this way, any problem faced will, God willing, be resolved in a cordial manner," he said, adding that ties between the two countries remained strong.

Yudhoyono is expected to visit oil operations in East Kalimantan and temporary holding centers for returning Indonesian migrant workers who fled Malaysia as a government amnesty for illegal migrant workers expired last week. *AFP*



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Suicide victim tagged as gunman in shooting of Taiwan president

TAIPEI—An unemployed loner who later committed suicide was believed to be the gunman responsible for the mysterious eve-of-election shooting of Taiwanese President Chen Shui-bian last year, police said Monday.

In the latest twist to a case which has sparked feverish conspiracy theories, police said they now believed Chen Yi-hsiung fired the shots which slightly injured Chen and running mate Annette Lu on March 19.

Opponents of pro-independence candidate Chen accused the the president of staging the shooting, which occurred as the pair were campaigning in a jeep in southern Tainan, in order to win a last-minute "sympathy vote."

Chen later won the election by a razor-thin 0.22 percent margin. The opposition has filed two lawsuits challenging Chen's legitimacy in the reelection and immediately greeted Monday's revelations with skepticism.

Though police have made several arrests in connection with the shooting, Criminal Investigation Bureau Director Ho Yu-Yi said they had only made a breakthrough after obtaining information from the suspect's family.

"Breakthroughs were achieved in the last three days after family members of the key suspect, Chen Yi-hsiung, broke months of silence and provided details of his links to the shooting," Ho said.

The suspect had admitted to his wife that he was the one who pulled the trigger after three videotape images showing him running from the scene of the shooting were broadcast on television, Ho told journalists.

The suspect's wife blamed her husband, in his 50s, and "asked him to shoulder his own problem," Ho said.

Chen, who was once chief of a local wrestling association, lived some 800 meters from the crime scene. Neighbors described him "a lone person," according to television reports.

He had become unusually quiet following the shooting and cut his yellow jacket into pieces before burning them, according to Ho.

The man was found drowned in Anping harbor in Tainan on March 29, 10 days after the shooting, in an apparent suicide, Ho added.

His family had decided to keep the incident quiet and had the body cremated on March 30, with the cause of death listed as accidental drowning.

The suspect had said in wills for his wife, two sons and two daughters which had since been destroyed that he had been depressed since Chen became president in 2000, Ho said.

THIS frame grab of a film released by Taiwan's police authorities in Taipei March 7, shows the suspected gunman responsible for the election-eve March 19, 2004 shooting of Taiwan's President Chen Shui-bian escaping from the crime scene. AFP

Investigators had tracked down the suspect after months of investigation confirmed that he had purchased a pistol and several bullets identical to those used in the shootings from an underground firearms maker, Ho said.

But police did not consider the case solved, pending further evidence including the gun the suspect had used, he added.

The main opposition Kuomintang (KMT) whose chair Lien Chan lost the presidential polls greeted the latest revelations with skepticism.

"This is an obvious political manipulation. We cannot but question the motives behind this," said KMT spokesperson Chang Jun-kun, adding the party would hold a rally to mark the anniversary of the shooting. *AFP*

Palestinians now shunning suicide bombers as they reach out for peace

By Wafa Amr

NABLUS, West Bank—Unlike many Palestinian suicide bombers, Abdallah Badran was not feted with portraits pasted on town walls after he blew himself up at an Israeli nightclub on Feb. 25.

And for the first time, militant factions which once competed to take responsibility for any attack and adopt the bomber as one of their own rushed to distance themselves from the explosion that killed five Israelis.

Sentiment in Palestinian society has swung against violence since Mahmoud Abbas was elected president in January after Yasser Arafat's death and engineered a ceasefire, a precondition for US-sponsored talks with Israel on Palestinian statehood.

Badran's violation of the truce caused widespread anger and condemnation by Palestinians for the first time since a revolt started in Israeli-occupied territories in September 2000.

"Not a single poster was printed for Abdallah Badran. This is the first time people haven't printed posters of a bomber. It is a sign people rejected the bombing," said Palestinian politician Abdel-Fattah Hamayel. "The celebrations that used to follow such attacks did not take place this time either."

The bombing shook hopes for peacemaking which have emerged in Israel and the Palestinian territories since Abbas and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon issued mutual commitments to calm at a summit in Egypt on Feb. 8.

Islamic Jihad leaders exiled in Lebanon claimed responsibility for the Tel Aviv attack after cell commanders in the West Bank and Gaza denied any involvement and reiterated their commitment to a pledge of quiet given to Abbas.

Aides to Abbas said initial inquiries showed that the Lebanese Shiite Muslim movement Hezbollah, backed by Syria and Iran, all sworn enemies of Israel, orchestrated the bombing by a splinter cell in the West Bank.

They said some exiled Islamic Jihad leaders in Lebanon and Syria apparently commissioned it without consulting local West Bank and Gaza counterparts. Hezbollah denied any link to the attack, which led to six arrests by Pal

Confronted by a loss of local community support for attacks, many militants have lost motivation to carry out more.

"Badran is a martyr after all, but no one wants to adopt him or take care of his family. This is new and worrying. We now know everyone wants to give a political settlement a chance," said Ala Sanakreh, a leading Fatah militant on Israel's wanted list.

"None of the factions wants to be held responsible for foiling the truce at a time of great hope for the resumption of peace moves. This is new," said Civil Affairs Minister and Gaza security strongman Mohammad Dahlan.

The Sharon-Abbas truce deal and the relative calm that has followed have raised Palestinian hopes of normality and economic improvement after four years of bloodshed and deprivation.

But Israel responded to the Tel Aviv attack by suspending plans to pull back forces from several West Bank cities and reconsidering a promise to free hundreds of prisoners.

Palestinian concern about missing a window of opportunity heightened this month when Israel said it had foiled an attack by seizing an explosives-laden car, while militants detonated another car bomb near soldiers in Nablus.

Neither incident caused Israeli casualties but some Nablus residents responded by openly cursing militants for behavior that could shelve releases of relatives from Israeli prisons.

However, al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades militants in Abbas' Fatah movement who rigged the Nablus car bomb said they had been provoked by continued Israeli army raids to detain wanted men.

Although it was among the main militant groups which promised calm at Abbas' request, the Brigades consist largely of disparate armed cells without central command or discipline.

Fatah's executive had earlier withheld the salaries of Brigades gunmen to protest at their refusal to obey orders for restraint, prompting them to turn to other sources of funding, particularly Hezbollah. Such money has flowed only if attacks continue.

Fatah militant Sanakreh and other fugitives said they now counted on Abbas to reach a deal with Israel to end their life on the run.

"I'm a fugitive. In recent weeks I have felt safe enough to go back to my house and see my friends and family again. But after the Tel Aviv attack I'm back in hiding," said Mohamad Zetawi, a Brigades member in Tulkarm. *Reuters*

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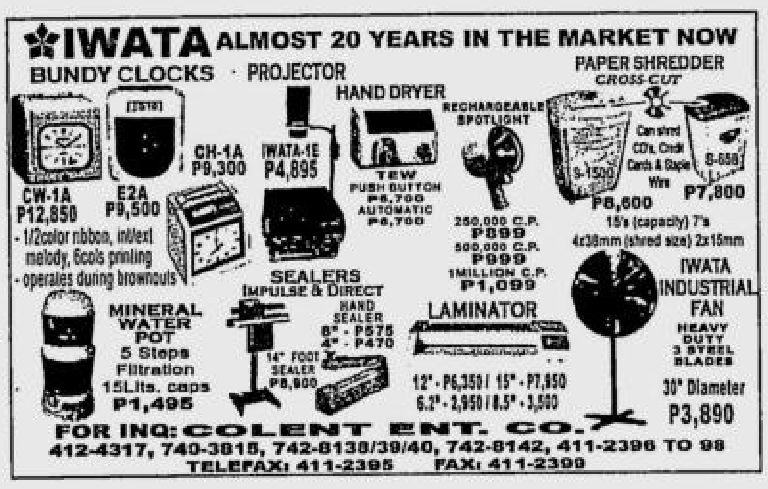

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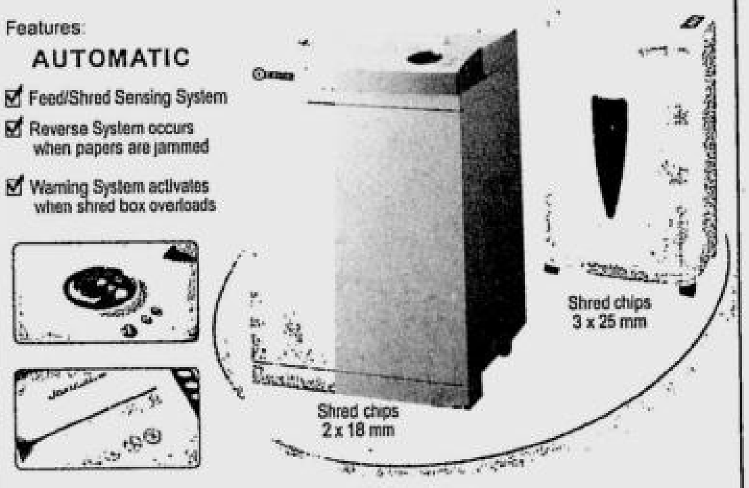

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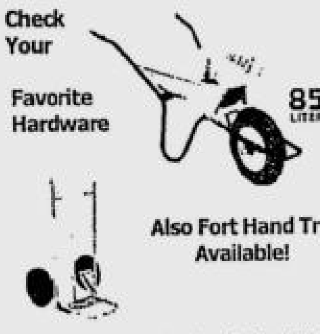

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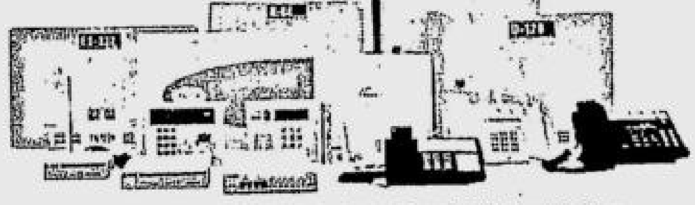

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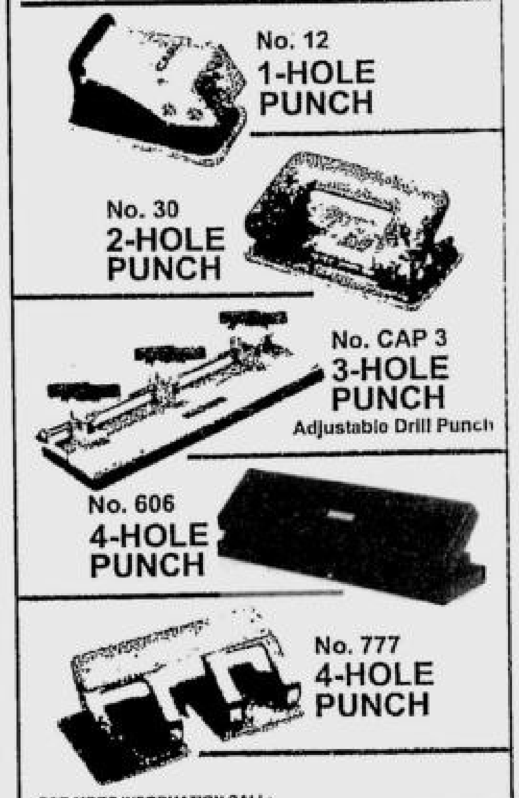

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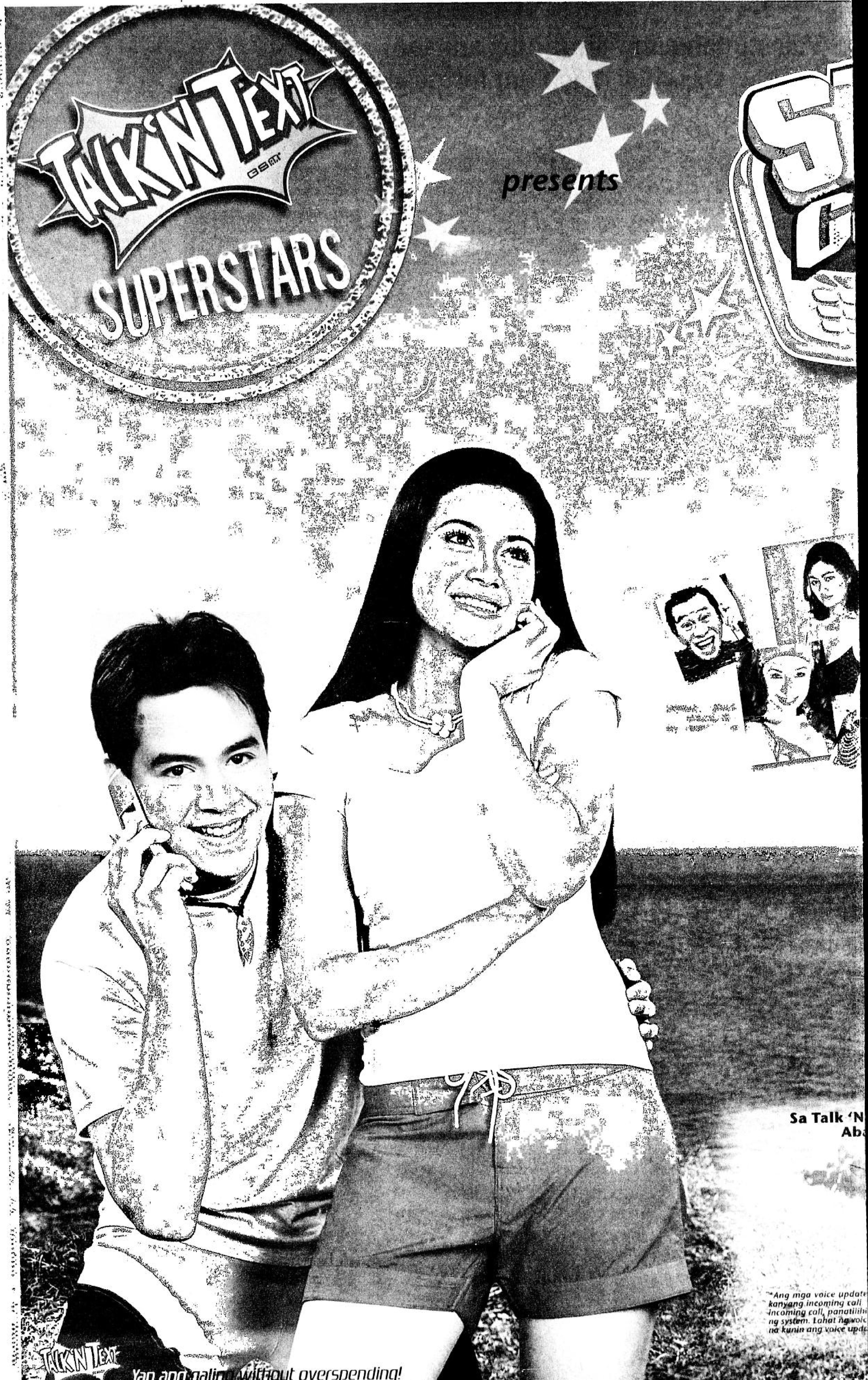
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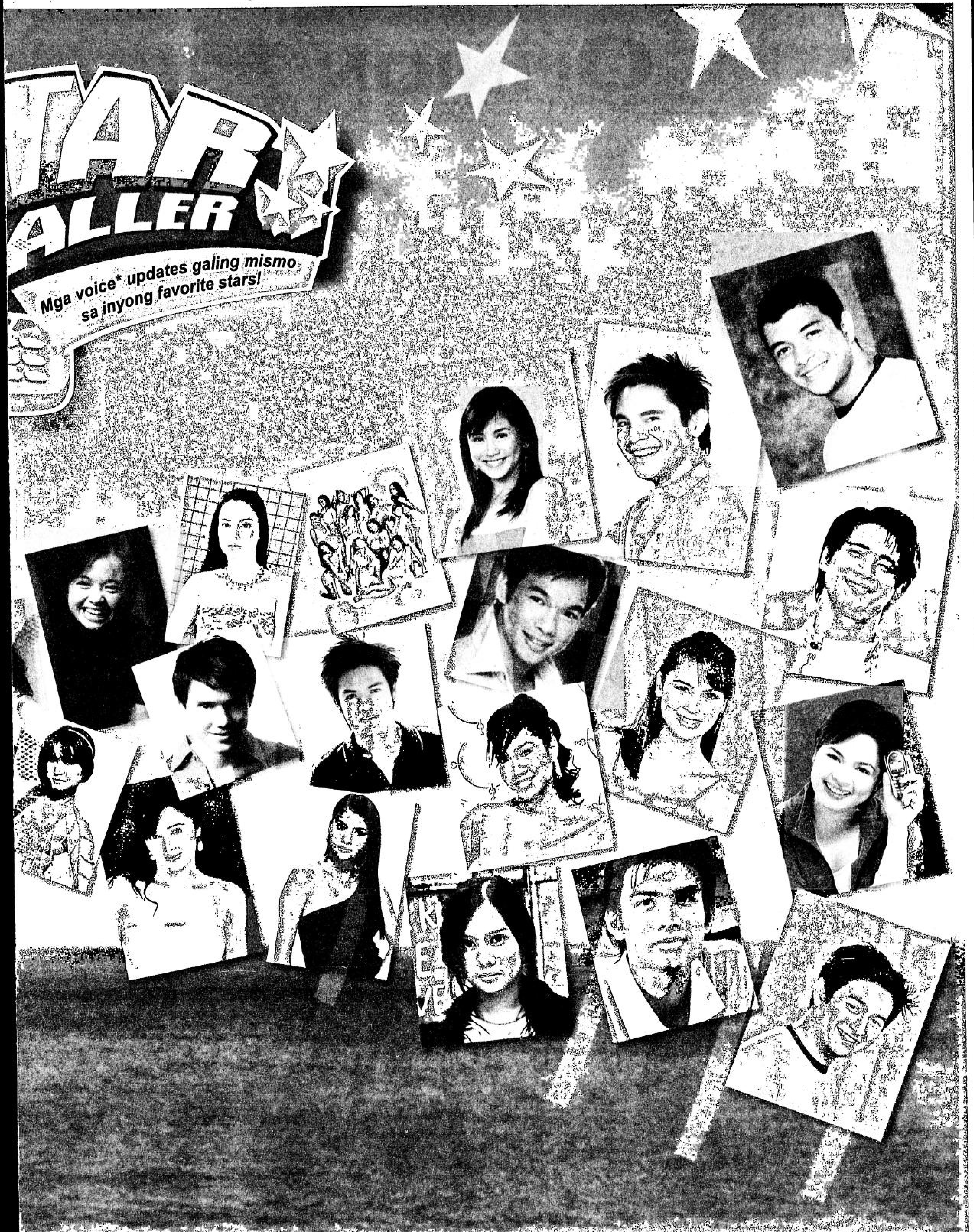

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OPINION

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Useful debate

EDITORIAL

ALBAY Rep. EDCEL Lagman's challenge last week to the Catholic Church to a debate on a measure that would define the government's family planning policy focuses attention on a problem that may be a contributory factor to the poverty of our nation.

Lagman's challenge was quickly rejected by Lipa Archbishop Ramon Arguelles and Lingayen-Dagupan Archbishop Oscar Cruz. Arguelles said he and Lagman were not equals. Cruz said they would be arguing on different frequencies, because while he would be speaking in the sphere of morality, Lagman would be talking in the realm of the economy.

It is unfortunate that the two religious leaders have rejected the call for a debate on a very vital issue of the day. It is also unfortunate that Lagman has rejected a debate with any of the archbishops' "anointed subalterns." Subalterns or not, authorized representatives of the Church could help shed light on an issue that has been shrouded in a lot of misconceptions (pun unintended), wrong ideas, distortions and plain misinformation. An open debate could clear up these misconceptions.

A high population growth rate has been one of the major problems of the country since the end of World War II. In the period 1950-1955, the population growth rate was 2.99 percent. The highest growth rate was recorded in the period 1960-1965—3.09 percent. Thankfully, the population growth rate has been going down: it was 2.05 percent in 1995-2000 and is projected at 1.84 percent for 2000 to 2005.

But the country could conceivably do better with a lower population growth rate in the next 10 to 20 years. In 2000 the Philippines ranked 14 on the list of countries with a population of 50 million inhabitants or more. At that time our population was more than 76 million. The population is expected to grow to more than 128 million by 2050. Estimates of the United Nations Population Division show a moderate growth rate of 1.84 percent for the period 2000-2005.

But still that may be too high a rate. Population pressure would create very serious problems in both the urban and rural areas. Economists say that the creation of enough jobs and the provision of basic needs just to maintain the present low standard of living would be very difficult, if not impossible, if the growth rate would be 1.8 percent or higher. They say unemployment would rise and more people would migrate to the urban areas because of lack of jobs in the rural areas. In the urban areas, the problems of lack of housing, unemployment, high crime rate and lack of health facilities would worsen.

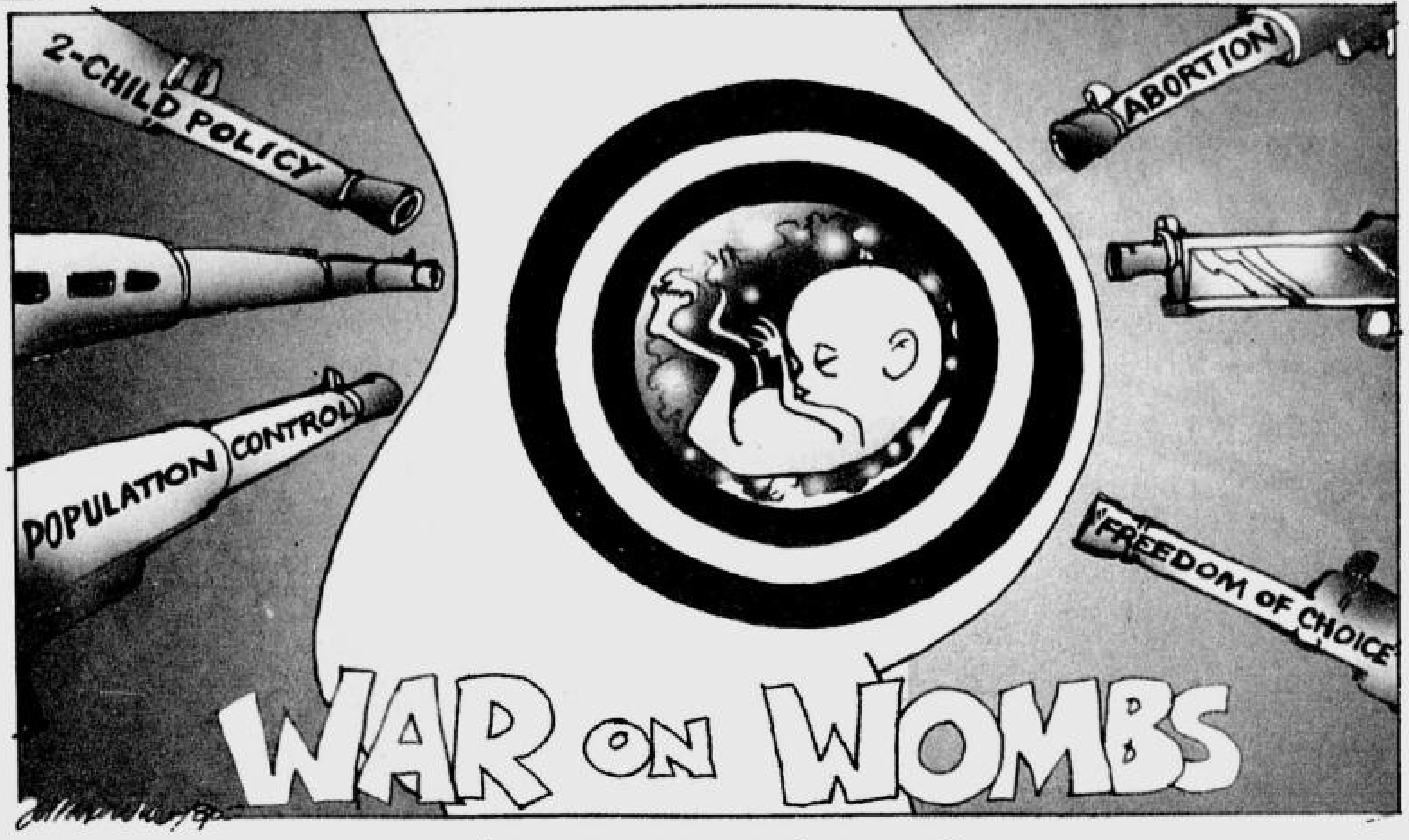
There is an urgent need to curb population growth if the country is to attain a higher economic growth rate in the next decade or two. That is why it is good that people in government are giving more attention to the problem and have presented concrete proposals to deal with it.

Lagman's measure proposes a non-compulsory ideal family size of two children. It would require mandatory "age-appropriate" sex education from Grade 5 to fourth year high school. It would disseminate medically safe and legal contraceptives and prohibit the distribution of abortion-inducing drugs. It would condemn abortion as a criminal act. It would not prohibit the natural family planning methods favored by the Catholic Church. What is wrong with these provisions of the bill?

And what is wrong with the Ligtas Buntis program of the Department of Health? It would safeguard the health of mothers and children. It would get pregnant women, as well as those who will get pregnant, into a health program that will advise them and provide them with services. Note that the name of the program is "Ligtas Buntis" (Save the Pregnant), not "Itigil ang Pagbubuntis" (Stop Pregnancy). And yet there are those who say that the program would promote abortion.

Malthus, who wrote the famous theory on population about 200 years ago, said that education should be supported because it would help to impress on the people that "it is not the duty of man simply to propagate his species, but to propagate virtue and happiness." Education and information on population is urgently needed now.

A debate or some other form of public discussion could do a lot to promote an intelligent appreciation of the issues involved in population policy. It is high time that all sectors of the country got involved in such a discussion so that workable and acceptable solutions to the problem of high population growth can be adopted.



Please pass the salt

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

SAY "iodine deficiency disorder" or blurt out "IDD," and P1 gets you P10 that few will grasp what you're driving at.

IDD means, nutritionists tell us, lack of iodine in the body. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, 9 out of every 10 women in Mountain Province were necklaced with goiters from IDD. Over half the Cordilleras' population were similarly afflicted.

Among kids, IDD inflicts a toll in mental retardation, deaf-mutism and stunting. In the early 1990s, almost 7 percent of Filipino schoolchildren had goiter, higher than the 5 percent cut-off point. That's when a disease is tacked up on the list of public health problems. Was a generation of cretins unavoidable? some asked then.

"Iron deficiency anemia affects as many as 600 million women and children in South East Asia," the Asian Development Bank notes. Its effects "include increased maternal and infant mortality, limited learning capability, reduced immunity against diseases and reduced ability to work and function."

Over the last decade, the Philippines attacked the problem with a combination of law, vitamin supplements and innovations. As part of his first 100 days in office, President Fidel V. Ramos, ordered that all CAR residents be provided with iodized oil capsules. Pregnant women got priority billing the following year.

But spiraling costs and snarled logistics compelled the Philippines to look at international experience. Worrying IDD levels in Sarawak, for example, led the government to import iodized salt in 1982. New laws jacked up iodized salt supplies in affected communities from 28 percent to 65 percent in seven years. Thailand fortified seasoning in instant noodles with vitamin A, iodine and iron since 1996. At present, 80 percent of Thai instant noodles are covered.

This trend heeds the US experience "as the first country that successfully used salt iodization, in the early 1920s, as a strategy" against IDD. Mandatory fortification of staples like flour, oil, sugar and salt saw rates of micronutrient deficiencies fall in Europe.

As a first step here, salt iodization plants were set up in the CAR. In tandem with the country's biggest salt producer, Pacific Farms, the Department of Health initiated a nationwide campaign for iodized salt use.

But it was rough sailing. A Nutrition Center salt farm survey stumbled across wide data and regulation gaps. Salt farms were often lumped with brackish water fish farms. Producers chafed at rules for quality control, warehouse and fortification plants. Neither were they organized to facilitate consultations.

In free markets, like the Philippines, consumers are king. Many think iodized salt is refined (*pino*), which is costlier. In fact, iodized salt can be fine, rough, solar or crystal—provided it's laced with iodine.

"When Congress passes a law, it's a joke," the comedian Will Rogers once snorted. "And when it cracks a joke, it's a law." But to Congress' credit, it institutionalized salt iodization in 1995 by enacting the "Asin Law." RA 8976 mandates iodization of all salt for human and animal consumption.

Tasked to implement the law, the Bureau of Food and Drugs was swamped. It had to ensure mandatory iodization on a yearly staggered basis among big, medium, small and subsistence salt producers. That was more than it could handle.

"The road to hell is paved with good intentions." Despite the "Asin Law," consumption of iodized salt has remained piddling, rising to 25 percent in 2001 from 15 percent in 1995, barely enough to dent the health threat. Reasons: high price and lack of iodized salt.

Other countries, like Malaysia and Thailand, meanwhile, overtook the Philippines in iodized salt consumption, by ensuring supplies and mandating its use. China chose a different vehicle to reduce IDD: a large scale program, with manufacturers, to make iron-enriched soy sauce on meal tables. "A pilot study…showed that anemic school children given fortified soy sauce had significantly better iron profiles than those who did not," an ADB paper notes.

Here, the tide turned in October 2002 with the health department's "Patak sa Asin" campaign where salt in markets and sari-sari stores were tested using low-cost test kits (a drop of solution makes iodized salt turn blue). Backed by local governments and schools, the "Patak sa Warehouse" campaign followed.

Tracking revealed the upward surge. A Unicef survey showed that 31 percent of households used iodized salt three years back. The 2003 National Nutrition survey found use of iodized salt had risen to 56 percent. Now it's 77 percent, says the latest Helen Keller International survey

Using urine tests, the National Nutrition Survey found that "from 1998 to 2003, median level urinary iodine among schoolchildren increased from 71 microgram per liter to 201 microgram per liter."

What does that mean, in layman's lingo? Below 100, IDD would pose a major public health problem. But at 201, "it is now documented that the Philippines has solved its iodine deficiency problem, although pockets of deficiencies still exist."

Thus, the country beat a major threat but few noticed. That's understandable. The victors are invisible. A goiter bulge intrudes. But normal necks go unremarked. There's no accounting table for tallying the number of kids saved from cretinism.

But there'll be little loafing on this laurel. Tomorrow's battles will be with vitamin A gaps, which cause blindness, and illnesses from iron anemia. But passing the salt signals that failure is not necessary.

(E-mail: juan_mercado@pacific.net.ph)

Terrorist

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

BARELY had I written about the dangers of the anti-smut bills, saying among other things that it posed a menace to democracy, being all of a piece with moves toward abridging various freedoms, when Armed Forces Deputy Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Edilberto Adan went out of his way to prove me right. From another front, he wants stiff sanctions imposed on reporters who interview terrorists.

"[The terrorists] kill and bomb, and then the media give them the opportunity to talk. It's stupidity on the part of some media to allow these terrorists or people identified with terrorist groups to air their complaints. [Interviewing terrorists] is an abuse of press freedom. They (the terrorists) are using the so-called press freedom to advance themselves. So they are the ones abusing us."

Now, what is so frightening about that proposal?

To begin with, its premise is best confined only to action movies. In action movies (which are called that because they have more action than thought), you know who the terrorists are. You are left in little doubt of it, as they are introduced from the start committing sadistic acts: slitting men's throats, raping women and blowing toddlers in walkers to bits in outdoor cafés. And action movies have become more and more inventive in depicting villains wreaking atrocious mayhem, some with fiendish humor, aware of the caricature they are making, others completely mean-spiritedly, taking themselves seriously and their audiences for a ride.

You are left in no doubt about who the terrorists are moreover because in the past they were slit-eyed or spoke with guttural accents, being Vietnamese or Russians (Rambo's foes), while today they are bearded and speak with Middle Eastern accents, being Arabs or Muslims (typically airplane hijackers). Of course, you root for the hero(es) and want nothing more than the terrorists to get their just desserts.

Unfortunately, life is more complicated than that, as more serious movies like Oliver Stone's "Platoon" and Stanley Kubrick's "Full Metal Jacket" showed in the past, and as movies from the Arab countries themselves, not least of them Iran, which has been making waves in film, show today. Easy to see which version of life is more in keeping with reality.

To accept Adan's proposal is to embrace a Steven Seagal view of the world, and obliterate dark, shadowy and faceless villains. Well, in real life, those faceless villains do have faces and live lives not unlike ours, and see the people who wreak mayhem upon them and their children as terrorists.

That brings me to the heart of the matter. What is frightening about Adan's open proposal is the same thing that was frightening about Alfredo Lim's et al.'s veiled proposal in the past to send drug-pushers and other dregs of the earth to their Maker, preferably inside steel drums rolled on to the Pasig River. It reposes all power of judgment about who the dregs of the earth are upon them. They are judge, jury and, completely literally, executioner.

At the very least, it reposes that power in those whose interest, or justification, or survival rests on the exaggeration of the threat. We do not need to hypothesize on what will happen if we just took the AFP's word on who our friends and enemies are. That actually happened several years ago, in the aftermath of 9/11, when GMA took on George Bush's fascistic airs and imposed a blackout in Basilan and neighboring places. The media were prevented from covering the military campaign against the Abu Sayyaf. All we had to go by were self-serving statements about how they were winning the war. If Fr. Cirilo Nacorda were not a priest, he would have been severely sanctioned for charging that the military was actually coddling the Abu Sayyaf rather than fighting it. That would have constituted abetting terrorism.

At the very most, it reposes the power of judging who the terrorists are upon those whose actions in the past and present, if Amnesty International and other human rights bodies are to be believed, fall squarely under the category of "terrorism." That is not unlike asking a philandering judge to sit over a case involving infidelity. I do not recall that the military called for sanctions to be imposed on those who interviewed the Oakwood mutineers, who threatened to blow up their hostage tower if attacked. I do recall that GMA got very, very pissed off and wanted those sanctions imposed on a reporter from GMA7 for doing exactly that. But she backed off when she got flak from media for the obvious attempt at censorship. All of which merely shows how capriciously government can use the label "terrorist."

There is always another side to the story, as Al Jazeera, the news organization Bush tried to suppress in the US after 9/11, has shown. Indeed, as it has shown even more clearly, the other side of the story is probably closer to the truth. Certainly, Al Jazeera's stories about the US invasion of Iraq are more believable than Fox Network's stories about the US liberation of that country. Except in this country, of course.

The business of journalists, much like those of artists and other writers, is to keep an open mind, to probe as deeply as resources and deadline permit, to challenge accepted truths, especially official ones. That was what Edgar Snow did for China (he wrote "Red Star Over China," now a classic journalism textbook) and that was what John Pilger did for Vietnam at a time when both countries were reviled as constituting the Yellow Peril. "Terrorism" is a terrifying word: You are bound to find it practiced most by the fanatics who vow to fight it.

Adan should think again. He insists on imposing severe penalties on journalists who interview terrorists, no one may want to interview him.

Lady solons run House for a day

POLITICAL TIDBITS

Belinda Olivares-Cunanan

IN OBSERVANCE of International Women's Day, women took over the reins at the House of Representatives yesterday. Acting as speaker was Cebu Rep. Clavel Martinez, a lawyer, while Akbayan Rep. Loretta Rosales, an activist and former professor, was the majority leader and GenSan Rep. Darlene Custodio was the Minority Leader. There are 40 women representatives in the House today, a big leap from the post-Edsa Congress when there were only about 15. Of the 40 female House members, Martinez and Rosales are among the most visible and articulate. Male colleagues say in admiration that these two know parliamentary procedures and do their homework studiously. I agree, having seen them in action over the years.

* * *

The fact is that in the House it's the ladies identified with activist and militant groups, such as Risa Hontiveros-Baranquel and Lisa Masa, who are heard. There's also Ilocos Norte Rep. Imee Marcos who speaks her mind on a variety of issues, although some of her views sound ridiculous coming from her. While a number of lady representatives are active in the committees, some others appear contented to be charter members of the committee of silence, best remembered for fashion and pulchritude.

The same is true in the Senate. Among the four lady senators, only Miriam Santiago is often heard from, though frequency in her case is not always a virtue. The other three still have to make their mark.

* * *

The massive reconstruction of Jolo is about to start, following weeks of heavy fighting between government troops and rebels loyal to the former MNLF chief Nur Misuari. The government is reportedly earmarking millions of pesos, which will doubtless be channeled to the relocation of displaced families and the repair of roads, school houses, mosques, etc.

The sad thing is that millions—even billions—of pesos will again be spent in the same as many millions went two years ago to the reconstruction of Maguindanao following the outbreak of hostilities there between the MILF and the AFP. The funds to be used are very scarce resources that could be channeled to more productive endeavors such as pump-priming the countryside there. I recall, too, the huge campaign of "Tabang Mindanao," a private sector umbrella coalition of NGOs, to raise funds to help those who were dislocated by the fighting. Now donor fatigue seems to have set in.

* * *

It's tragic that just when an area is getting rehabilitated, new hostilities flare up elsewhere in the big island, resulting in heavy damage that needs to be repaired. Thus, the Muslim-dominated areas, which are already among the poorest in the country, continue to remain mired in poverty. How to resolve the conflict there (where stopping the hostilities is only one aspect) so that the economy of Muslim Mindanao could flourish is the big question.

* * *

It's difficult to see the argument of anti-charter change folks that without the Senate to countercheck the House of Representatives, things would get worse. The House has had its share of notoriety over the years, but so has the Senate. One can recall the notorious rump session three years ago and the various credit downgrades that the UP economists directly attributed to the obstinacy, lack of urgency and grandstanding of the senators. Recall how, as INQUIRER columnist Isagani Cruz has repeatedly noted, the senators protected Panfilo Lacson by holding off the voting on the report of the committees that conducted a joint investigation of charges against him over three years ago.

While most everyone accepts the fact that today's Senate is a far cry from the era when intellectual titans inhabited its halls, it's also wrong to assume that just because the shift to unicameral would involve election by districts and therefore the abolition of nationally elected legislators, those who will occupy it would all be scalawags in the same mold as some House members. The fact is that there are scalawags in both chambers, just as there are statesmen and patriots in them.

* * *

From the current gridlock over many issues, it's obvious that what we need is just one chamber to which we must elect the best people, be they ex-senators or ex-representatives. In a unicameral set-up, the check and balance will be inside the chamber itself, among the members who'll be slugging it out in the realm of ideas.

The parliamentary/unicameral system will save the taxpayers a lot of money (now it costs roughly P10 billion to operate Congress, of which the Senate spends half). Moreover, it will help the political system mature, for power will reside in a majority coalition that has to perform, otherwise it will be booted out and replaced by the minority waiting in the wings. A parliamentary system also discourages turncoatism: if a majority legislator decides to join the minority, he has to give up all his positions in the coalition government. But the best argument is that there would mercifully be less of the movie and TV stars and basketball players, as they can never rise to become prime minister through a vote by their peers.

* * *

In our dzRH program last Sunday, former Sen. and 1971 Constitutional Convention delegate Heherson Alvarez likened the prime minister in a parliamentary system to the president/CEO of a corporation, who, if he does not perform well, would be fired by the board of directors or the stockholders. I left out, however, a significant part of what Alvarez said: that a PM performing well could go on and on in office. He noted that Malaysia's former Primer Minister Mahathir Mohammad remained in power for 22 years, bringing his country to unprecedented heights of prosperity, and that former British PM Margaret Thatcher held the top post for almost 12 years. Alvarez opined that Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo could be another Thatcher if she moves the country forward. Given the huge problems we have, that's a big hurdle.

Ten years after

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

NEW YORK—In 1995, at the opening and closing ceremonies for both the official meetings and the much larger NGO gathering of the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing and Huairou, the organizers and the Chinese government went all out on the hype and hoopla. The rites were marked by exuberant performances of lion dancers, jugglers and tumblers, dancers in the hundreds, fireworks and, of course, the infectious energy of an estimated 30,000 women and a few men gathering to talk about and affirm women's rights, and our striving for equality, development and peace.

In fact, so heated was the enthusiasm of the participants at the Beijing Conference, perhaps the largest UN gathering to date, that they even instigated climate change. When organizers of the NGO conference inquired from their hosts if they should take precautions against rain, the Chinese assured them that "it never rains here at this time of year." Well, what do you know, almost from the start, unseasonal rains turned the grounds of the hastily established conference site into a muddy mess. "This just proves that God is a man," a friend muttered. But I chose to look at it another way: When women gather and realize their strength, the power they exude can change the weather.

Ten years later, at the UN headquarters in this city, there is little expectation of women warming the chilly air. Celebrating "Beijing + 10," the mood is more subdued and reflective, with the participants seemingly having come to terms with the fact that the bright and blazing, tantalizing promises held out 10 years ago weren't as realistic or easy to achieve. Much progress has been made, true, and there is more than enough reason to celebrate. But the road has been rocky and twisted, and for many women, strewn with nearly insurmountable obstacles.

* * *

THIS somber mood was reflected in the subdued "celebration." Instead of a huge stadium or the Great Hall of the People, the site of the global observance of the Beijing Conference's 10th anniversary was a small conference hall in the basement of the UN headquarters. (Even if the much roomier and more impressive General Assembly Hall was not being used at the time.) With the audience in the conference room limited to two delegates per country, the rest of the delegates and NGO observers had to squeeze themselves into an adjacent hall, watching the proceedings on a huge TV monitor. While adequate, the arrangements could not but give the women the feeling of estrangement from the celebration. And the suddenly humbled circumstances gave one the feeling that the world's women—or at least the UN—were almost apologizing for what they had done a decade ago.

Things weren't helped any by the insensitivity of the UN leadership. It was bad enough that the 10th anniversary of the landmark women's gathering had to be observed in subdued rites in a basement conference room. Rubbing salt on the women's sensitivities was the choice of moderator, a male undersecretary who heads the UN media office. As if there weren't any number of women around of enough stature and skill to preside over the celebration!

* * *

STILL, despite all these, the "Beijing + 10" observance gave women the chance to reflect, in a way which a grand celebration could not allow, on the gains achieved through decades of struggle, and what it took to bring the world to see women as the equals of men.

The theme of the observance seemed to be "retrospect," a look back at all the previous women's conferences, and speeches by the surviving secretaries-general of these past conferences. The Philippines was represented in this line-up of speakers by former Sen. Leticia Ramos Shahani, who was secretary-general of the Third World Women's Conference held in Nairobi in 1985.

In the two years that the Nairobi "Forward-Looking Strategies" were being formulated, said Shahani, "consensus was very elusive until the end." Indeed, until 10 p.m. of the day of adjournment, "no agreement was achieved among the political blocs, and when a formula for consensus was finally found, separate voting on many contentious paragraphs was demanded." There was, said Shahani, "clapping, dancing and loud rejoicing" when the document was finally adopted, with the body adjourning at four in the morning, "an unforgettable experience and perhaps one of the most exhausting yet exhilarating conclusions to a world conference."

The major divide at the Nairobi conference, noted Shahani, was between women from rich and poor countries. "Women from the North demanded: 'Why introduce politics…when what women want are day care centers, jobs and social security?' The women from Africa replied: 'But firewood is politics; water is politics; food is politics.'"

The consensus achieved at the close of the Nairobi conference, she declared, proved that "women worldwide could be united, despite major differences, in a spirit of solidarity and commitment to fundamental freedoms. This solidarity must be strengthened after Beijing + 10."

* * *

THIS is why the divisive attempt of the US delegation to insert language on abortion in the political statement that will open the review and assessment of how governments have complied with the BPfA was resented and deemed so offensive by many delegations.

The work that lies before women at the end of the last decade is to assess how much progress was achieved after that historic meeting in Beijing, and then determine what else needs to be done not just to meet the challenges outlined in the Platform for Action, but also to truly change the lives of women worldwide. Ten years after Beijing, so much still remains to be done.

Mr. Gabot, who?

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY

Bambi L. Harper

LISTEN you people in the cultural field (with the exception of members of the board of the National Commission of Culture and the Arts), have you ever heard that name before? You know when you've been in this line of preservation, conservation, heritage, etc., after a while certain names ring bells with respect to the arts. Everyone knows everybody else.

Even before their proclamation as National Artists, we all knew Arturo Luz, Billy Abueva or Sionil Jose. Who hadn't heard of King Kasilag or Leonor Orosa Goquingco? Then there were the cultural workers like Augusto Villalon, Chita Gatbonton, Paulo Alcazaren and many others. Of course, it's perfectly possible that you're not familiar with these names especially if the subject of heritage and conservation didn't interest you. Maybe Mr. Gabot's name is familiar to you, but certainly not in connection with the arts.

The area of culture and tradition was a pretty tame one especially since there was never any money and few percentages. I mean it wasn't like this was Customs or the BIR. There was little controversy and what there was of it affected very few. I mean who cared that artifacts of the National Museum were tucked away in a warehouse of the University of the Philippines on Herran Street, now Pedro Gil? Or that the documents of the archives were being eaten by *anay* and kept helter-skelter thus facilitating the disappearance of several papers of value to those who understood these things. But as a whole, this was a field for genteel professors or maybe not so genteel but educated anyway.

As a whole politicians left "culture" alone. Nobody gave a plugged nickel if the head of a cultural agency remained there for a quarter of a century or whether awards were created in the name of fictional datus and government buildings named after non-existing princesses. I mean it made the president of the country giving out the awards a laughing stock among historians, but who paid attention to them? Of course, among the culturati these appeared to be calamities to be deplored and sighed about over endless cups of coffee, intellectuals being too poor to cry over martini and the like unless someone else is paying.

But times change, and a different wind was blowing. Maybe it was Jackie Kennedy or maybe Imelda who gave a certain cachet to collecting and old things. It became no longer *baduy* to swoon over some rotting piece of carving. As a matter of fact, these days you call the wood "distressed" not termite-ridden. People began to take notice that there was fun in grandma's old *saya* and photographs.

In the meantime, Marcos happened and so did Aquino. We sighed and rued the lack of interest in the old houses of Taal while others began to work after the preservation of Vigan.

It must be admitted that there has been some kind of progress. Townspeople have grown more vigilant and protective of the legacy left by their ancestors and perhaps parish priests are now aware that a 200-year-old piece of ivory belonging to a country's history is worth much, much more than a new galvanized iron roof. (This hasn't stopped them from imposing their standards of taste on people and implying that anyone ordained speaks ex-cathedra when he starts redecorating as recent events in Taal have shown).

It wasn't long before Sen. Eduardo Angara came up with a bill to update the organizational structure of the National Museum and push it into the 20th century. Finally, culture began to take its rightful place (or so we thought) with the creation of the Presidential Commission on Culture and the Arts. Of course, there was still no money, but at this point nobody really minded as long as an awareness of Filipino customs and traditions was beginning to be recognized as important.

Then the PCCA was converted by law into the National Commission on Culture and the Arts, with an endowment fund. National Artist Leandro Locsin was appointed its first chair.

And then the fun began. All of a sudden, it wasn't just any old picayune culture agency, especially when Dr. Jaime Laya, its second chair, left it with over a billion pesos in the till. There has been a mad scramble for its chairmanship, which brings me to the subject of Mr. Gabot, whose first name I don't even know. For reasons best known to Malacañang and God knows who's whispering in the President's ears these days, it is rumored that the man who works for a newspaper best known for its classified ads page (in what capacity I don't know and don't really care) is all set to sit as chair of the NCCA, the lead cultural agency of the government.

No one understands what the President is up to, if the allegations are true, and of course the audacity of certain people who don't know their limits. The NCCA has a perfectly good candidate for the position in the person of its executive director, Cecile Alvarez, who may not be everyone's candidate for Ms Congeniality but certainly has a track record. Her name rings bells. She probably could serve as both director and chair if the President so wanted. Of course, it's being said that heritage and patrimony are really lost causes in this administration, so perhaps it really doesn't matter who the President appoints. But watch that NCCA trust fund.

* * *

Comments to bambiharper@yahoo.com

Living again

YOUNG BLOOD

Rona Mistal Erfe

We want to know what the young are thinking about. What are their thoughts on current issues? We welcome contributions from the twentysomething and below.—Ed.

TODAY is the second week since I stopped communicating with my best friend. Today is the second week since I started working every day for 12 long hours uninterrupted. Today is the second week since I stopped feeling any affection for anyone and anything. Today is the second week since I found out that my boyfriend of four and a half years is getting married.

Aside from all this, I feel great. Actually, I am very happy.

Had I remained the same person that I was a couple of years back, I would now be wailing and crying until my tear ducts run dry. But when I heard the news from a common friend, I sat nonchalantly in one corner of McDo while feasting on my twister fries. I appeared just fine and I thought I really was feeling fine. But after downing my Coke, I just couldn't make the lump in my throat go away, so I excused myself and cried in the restroom. Okay, I cried for like five minutes and came back to my friend, explaining that my eyes had become swollen on account of my contact lenses. When we parted ways, I felt nothing. I felt numb.

That night while lying in bed and recalling what transpired the whole day, I was waiting for myself to cry some more. It used to be that for the longest time I'd cry, but to my surprise, not a single tear fell from my eyes. I thought that, perhaps, time had made me stronger. Or maybe all the tears I was to cry for him I had already exhausted.

I didn't cry again, but it hurt and it hurt deeply. In a situation like this, my normal self would involuntary be transported to Dome Café at the Shangri-La and, with my best friend listening, I would cry my heart out and end up cursing my boyfriend, dissecting every detail of the situation, analyzing him as if he were some specimen under a microscope.

But now it's different. I'm different. Instead of treating all of my friends to coffee so that I could cry in front of them while hearing the tinkling of my shattering ego, I have decided to just keep still and quiet. Now, believe it or not, I'm at peace. Instead of listening to the clichés mouthed by my well-meaning friends who would tell me to move on and assure me someone better is bound to come, I've spent the past two weeks in utter silence, traveling to the depths of my soul and listening to the rhythmic beating of my heart.

More importantly, I have been praying to God, not anymore for the miracle of bringing my first boyfriend back to my life, but for His assurance that He'd be here no matter what, that He'd get me through the tough times and that better days are yet to come. At nights when my body, heart and soul would feel cold, I would call on my God to bring me closer to His arms so I wouldn't feel the void inside me.

Today, two weeks after I heard the news and after spending a lot of time in solitude, I have realized that it is in silence that you can hear more, that it is in pain that you can feel pleasure, that it is in nothingness that you can see fullness.

Two weeks is fleeting. But even in this short span of time, my whole life was changed. The girl who was emotional and a certified crybaby grew up into a woman who is rational and objective. I have not been transformed into a poker-faced lady, but I've learned that it's best to face life's nauseous situations with emotional balance and calm.

My silence wrought an awful lot of better things in me. I am now ready to see and talk to my friends again. After days of putting my social life on hold, I can now look at people with the usual smile on my face and well equipped with the hard-earned lessons of the past two weeks.

Today is the second week since I started making productive changes in my life. Today is the second week since I started living again.

I wonder what twister fries really taste like…

Rona Mistal Erfe, 24, finished her AB in political science at the Far Eastern University and now works in the Legal Services Group of United Laboratories Inc.

NOTICE TO YOUNGBLOOD CONTRIBUTORS:

If you are sending your contributions by e-mail, please address it to youngblood@inquirer.com.ph together with your address and information about your age and the school, course and year you're enrolled in or if employed, the position you're holding and the company you work with.

THEY SAID

Desperate foes

"The desperation of the enemy cannot be underestimated, even as it lies in the throes of defeat."

—President Macapagal-Arroyo declaring all-out war on the perpetrators of the Valentine's Day bombing

Heart-breaking

"It broke my heart to see so many children resort to drugs and crime because they had nothing else to do, and little to hope for."

—Fr. Pierre Tritz, founder of Educational Research and Development Assistance which has been helping Filipino street kids for 30 years now

Lonely disease

"My session with the doctor today went on for two hours, with the doctor telling me that it would be good for me to be surrounded by family and friends. I listened, sobbing. This is a very lonely disease. These are my thoughts for today. I am sorry I imposed them on you."

—Philippine Daily Inquirer's entertainment editor Louie Camino's text message to a writer-friend weeks before he died

Mouthpiece

"The words are coming out of my mouth but I'm just not processing them."

—Actress Scarlett Johansson said of the jargon-laden script she was reading from a TelePrompTer as she handed out Oscar awards to movie engineers

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GMA's incendiary measures

THE ANTI-TERRORISM bill and its companion measure, the national ID system, are like the new taxes sought by the Arroyo administration: None will work. The anti-terrorism bill and the national ID system will mean more terrorism, not less; just as increasing the people's tax burden will heighten social unrest, not solve the debt crisis.

The anti-terrorism and national ID measures are tools of repression. No wonder, it is police spokesmen who are loudest in advocating them. As our government increasingly becomes a police state, there will come a time when victims of repression will have no recourse—in search of justice and revenge, as Muslims and many countries now find—but terrorism. Instead of reinforcing the police's hands, let us open to our people (especially the victims of injustice, hunger and poverty) hope-inspiring paths of life. Instead of relying on the police, who are at best perceived as a necessary evil, let us focus on development and growth in which all citizens participate in the tasks as well as in the rewards.

On the other hand, the Arroyo regime addresses the debt crisis as if it were a tax collector of the World Bank-International Monetary Fund. Never mind if the new taxes further oppress the already oppressed people. According to the WB itself, 40 percent of Filipinos live on $2 or less a day, and 12 percent on $1 or less a day. This was before the prices of essential commodities—petroleum, power, water, transport fare, toll fees, and foods—spiraled up several times. For President Macapagal-Arroyo, another P80 billion must be raised through VAT (increase it or enlarge its base) and turned over to our creditors, never mind if it must be taken from Juan de la Cruz's dining table. That's what the WB-IMF tandem wants. That's what the Arroyo regime wants to do. That's incendiary. Is there really no other way out of the debt crisis?

—AMADO GAT INCIONG,
INCIONG AND ASSOCIATES,
Unit 301 Union Square Condominium,
145 15th q Avenue, Cubao, Quezon City

LETTERS

NPA rebels conquered by love

Successful computer program

THIS is with reference to the column of Conrado R. Banal III (PDI, 02/10/05) regarding the personal computers (PCs) distributed by the Department of Trade and Industry when Sen. Mar Roxas was still its secretary.

Banal, lamentably, was misinformed, if he was referring to the Personal Computers for Public Schools (PCPS) program of then Trade Secretary Roxas.

It is not true, as alleged by Banal, that the Japanese government-donated PCs distributed under the program "are still not running...for they did not have the software to make them run."

The Philippine government did not have to spend for the software because the donation package for each school computer laboratory included 20 brand-new desktop PCs, two printers, one external modem, one external CD-ROM drive, DOST courseware and updated computer software.

Under the PCPS, a total of 30,000 PCs were distributed to 2,096 public high schools nationwide from March 18 to Dec. 31, 2002. These PCs are well maintained and in good running condition.

Over 500,000 high school students are benefiting from the PCPS, now considered the largest computerization project for public high schools. Thus far, the project has benefited mostly poor communities, with 81 percent of the school beneficiaries located in the countryside.

Finally, under the PCPS, a total of 5,500 teachers were trained on PC operations, troubleshooting and preventive maintenance.

We hope the facts presented will enlighten Banal and INQUIRER readers.

—FELICISIMO B. CARDENAS,
supervising legislative staff officer,
Office of Sen. Mar Roxas,
Rm. 512 Philippine Senate,
GSIS Building, Pasay City

Wrong info on customs incident

IN HIS column, titled "Top customs brass humiliated in Cebu" (PDI, 02/22/05), Ramon Tulfo narrated how my "guards" prevented Celso Templo, Customs acting deputy commissioner on Intelligence and Enforcement Group (IEG) and retired Police Chief Supt. Nestorio Gualberto, Enforcement and Security Services (ESS) director, from entering my office. This did not shock or make me angry. It made me wonder how one could write such things on the basis of unverified information. The least Tulfo could have done was to do some counterchecking and call and hear my side.

The incident referred to took place last Monday, Feb. 14, shortly before noon.

I was in the office at about 10:30 a.m. while waiting for both Templo and Gualberto as we had agreed to meet at 11 a.m. It was wrong for Tulfo to say "the guards at the door of Bibit's office prevented the two high-ranking Customs officers from entering."

My staff knew about the meeting. And I was aware of the appointment as I had spoken with Templo beforehand. In fact, I flew all the way from Manila that very same day to attend that meeting.

While waiting for both Templo and Gualberto to arrive, I decided to talk to my other visitors, Bishop Nilo Tayag and company, who came all the way from Laguna. When Deputy Commissioner Templo and Gualberto arrived at my office at 11:30 a.m., I was still with my visitors.

It was actually just a matter of 10-12 minutes of waiting, if they had chosen to wait. But to my surprise, Templo angrily left my office. I even had my staff call them back but they were ignored.

There are several bits of "misinformation" I can cite in Tulfo's column, but I would rather not delve into them any farther.

But just let me point the part where he said, "Templo didn't have to call a subordinate to say that he would come visiting…informing the Customs Chief would have forewarned the smugglers."

I hate to interpret what Tulfo was trying to say with those words, but I could not help ponder how the readers understood it.

But I'm not worried on how Tulfo is trying to picture me badly; I am more concerned how unverified information would affect the INQUIRER's integrity.

Also, I was a bit surprised that Tulfo quickly learned about the incident. What amused me more was how he devoted half of his column space to make a trivial matter appear big. It is just so funny to see myself exposed in a national paper on what seems to be minute issue.

—BILLY C. BIBIT,
district collector,
Bureau of Customs, Port of Cebu

Homosexuality in the CPP

THE GAY marriage or same-sex marriage that was officiated in a revolutionary rite in Compostela Valley, Mindanao was a manifestation of cultural decadence within the communist movement in the country.

Satur Ocampo, Bayan Muna Party-list representative, tried to justify this decadence by citing the latest trend of same sex marriage in many Nordic countries—the "way of the 21st century."

Kung noong araw binabanatan ng Partido ang kabulukang ito ng Kanluraning kultura, ngayon lantaran na ang pagtanggap ng mga Marxistang tulad ni Satur Ocampo na bigo sila sa … ng kabaklaang ito na talamak na sa loob ng kilusang "rebolusyonaryo." (If in the past the [Communist] Party condemned this rot in the Western culture, today there is an open admission among Marxists, like Satur Ocampo, that it has failed to stop the homosexuality which has become widespread within the "revolutionary" movement.)

This is disgusting, to say the least. The enjoyment of homosexual perversion even inside the movement is being used by the Sison-Jalandoni-Ocampo revisionist clique as a "mass line" to invite more homosexuals to join the national democratic movement.

This is no longer surprising, considering that some of those prominent homosexuals in show business have been able to encroach into the communist movement as far back as 1970. It is an open secret that a former high-ranking member of the Communist Party of Philippines' central committee is a homosexual, a fact that the party cadres are too scared to admit and to acknowledge lest they be suspected as DPA (deep penetration agent) provocateurs.

This is just one of those policies that show CPP's ethical standards on sensitive social and political issues that bear directly on the question of remolding and creating a new man under a new socialist system in a new society under the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The communist movement, under the leadership of Jose Ma. Sison and his fascist acolytes, has once again demonstrated its situational political line that entails recruitment and eventual ascension of homosexuals and other sex perverts in the ranks of the CPP and its armed unit, the New People's Army.

This has been the characteristic of this movement ever since its heyday in early '70s because sex opportunism has been one of the hallmarks of the chairman's ideological weaknesses.

The 300 members of IREC are living witnesses to the preponderance of the gay virus in the revolutionary movement, a malady which will affect the entire membership in the long run.

—ELIAS RAMIRO DIAZ,
irec_erd@yahoo.com

Memento from Shirley Temple

THE INTERESTING article "Has Shirley Temple been to the Philippines?" (PDI, 2/12/05) aroused memories of my cherished meeting with then Ambassador Shirley Temple Black in Prague, Czechoslovakia in 1990.

I am a 67-year-old former diplomat who retired from our foreign service on June 12, 2003. From 1989 to 1993, I was the first resident ambassador of the Philippines to Hungary with concurrent accreditation to Czechoslovakia. Shortly after presenting my credentials as ambassador to Czechoslovakia President Vaclav Havel, I put in a request to call on Ms Black who was the American ambassador to Czechoslovakia. The request was granted, and Ambassador Black graciously received me at her embassy in Prague.

We talked about a number of subjects for about 20 minutes. I asked her whether she had been to the Philippines and she said no. I then said the following: "I recall that your former husband, actor John Agar, made a movie in the Philippines. The title of the film was 'Days of the Trumpet' and it is about the American occupation of the Philippines." She seemed to be taken aback by what I said but she managed to compose herself immediately and, with a faint smile, quizzically said, "Really?" (I am a movie buff as well! If memory serves correctly, the movie also starred Pancho Magalona and other Filipino actors.)

We had a pleasant talk, and at the end of my call, she even accompanied me to my car which enabled my wife, who was waiting inside the car, to see her at close range. Ambassador Black was short, had trademark curly hair and had put on weight.

I regret not having any picture with her. Protocol had taken the better of me. I realized the impropriety of bringing along a "picture-taker" to a diplomatic call. I was also conscious of the fact that Ambassador Black was protocol chief of the US State Department before her assignment to Prague.

However, I was flabbergasted when I opened my mail in July 1992. Right before my eyes was the farewell diplomatic note of Ambassador Black with her precious signature clearly inscribed on it. Now, I am in possession of a real collector's item.

—JUANITO P. JARASA, 41 Mayaman St.,
UP Village, Quezon City

Reality check for the starry-eyed

IN LIGHT of our government's unilateral declaration that the nation's fiscal crisis is over, the recent downgrading by Moody's Investor Service of the Philippine's sovereign credit standing by two notches serves as a good reality check for our starry-eyed Malacañang officials.

To paraphrase (with apologies) a famous quote: You can fool some Filipinos all of the time, and you can fool all Filipinos some of the time, but you cannot fool other countries that easily.

Let's just hope that our Malacañang's wonder boys and girls will not use Moody's downgrading as another pretext or excuse to impose yet another round of oppressive, insane and inequitable tax measures on us, poor Filipinos. If only our government officials will be subject to (and honestly pay) the same taxes that they want our countrymen to pay! Perhaps, then, they will experience and feel what's it like to struggle to survive on a meager, fixed monthly salary (especially when you're married, with children).

To our lawmakers: Put yourselves in our shoes first, and see what it's like to be an ordinary workingman, before legislating more tax laws! The answer to our economic crisis is not more taxes, but more integrity from our public servants.

—JOHN ANTHONY P. HILARIO,
john_hilario@lycos.com

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Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

Do you believe former Congressman Dennis Roldan is involved in the kidnap for ransom of a 3-year old Chinese-Filipino?

I believe Roldan is guilty of three things: Kidnapping, Corruption, and Extremely Bad Acting.
—Carlo Caguimbal, *Lipa City*

ano pa nga ba! Di ba trabaho yan ng karamihan sa mga politiko, para maklikom ng pera?
—Joel Quintela, *Tagum City*

What a question! Ano ba akala nyo sa readers nyo, puro congresmen at artista? Cla lang naman ang may duda ah!
—ramon g. lukban, *quezon city*

MaLay ko! Kc hindi naman cia nagsasalita bka scripted yan sa pelikula, para mabenta, di ba!
—zenaida caguioa, *urdaneta city*

NO, but if ever he is proven guilty let d law take its place, even if he's a former lawmaker, proves dat no one is above d law
—joselito carabeo, *parañaque city*

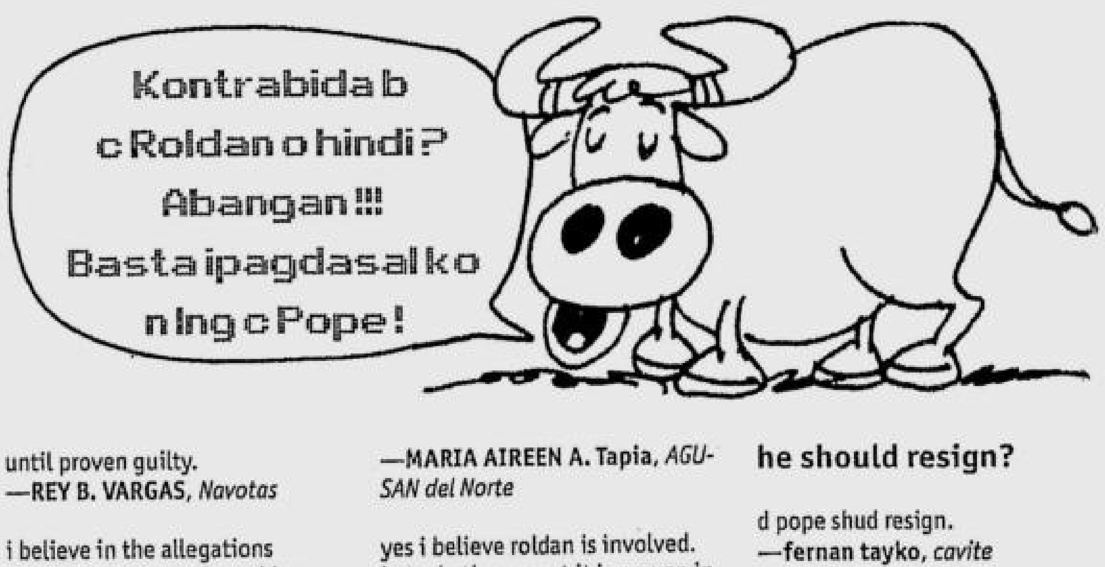
yes, frOm d issues dat have been discusSed Over tv, radiO &d papers. we cud see dat he has a hand On d kidnapPing incident.
—erelle lapitan, *naga city*

yes, bcoz of his extravagant vices, lifestyle.
—jinky cardiel, *naga city*

My personal opinion as 2 d culpability of handsome ROLDAN won't stand in court. What will do him in are d material proof
—Vivencita R. Togle, *Cainta*

yes! Pwedeng mangyari sa kaña yun dahil di lang naman cya ang celebrity ang involved sa criminal cases. Di ba silence means yes?
—rosemarie abner, *quezon city*

Any accused is presumed innocent until proven guilty.
—REY B. VARGAS, *Navotas*


Kontrabida b
c Roldan o hindi?
Abangan!!!
Basta ipagdasal ko
n lng c Pope!

i believe in the allegations against representative roldan, maybe he was too overwhelmed with his villain roles.
—Ian D. Laput, *mandaluyong city*

yes i think he is involved. I haven't heard or read his alibi.
—alberto c benitez, *quezon city*

yes i believe --very much ObviOus, andOn cya nang ginawa ang raid, eh di kasangkOt cya sa krimen.
—MARIA AIREEN A. Tapia, *AGUSAN del Norte*

yes i believe roldan is involved. but whether or not it is proven in court is another matter
—Gerard Gumban, *davao city*

Huwag natin pangunahin ang magiging RESULTA NG KASO. Let the law take its own course.
—ENN MERIELL Largo, *Cagayan de Oro City*

Considering the Pope's ill health, do you think he should resign?

d pope shud resign.
—fernan tayko, *cavite*

No, d pope shouldn't have 2 resign. as a local bishop said, Let's not speculate but rather pray 4 d pope
—Gerard Gumban, *davao city*

Yes, the Pope should be allowed to resign and retire. He has become sickly due to his old age…
—Juan Deveraturda, *Subic, Zambales*

he should not resign coz d doctors said he can live for more years.
—gilda Miguel, *san mateo, rizal*

in any organization, in order not to hamper systematic operation, the incapacity 2 dispense responsibility needs resignation.
—Eduardo Cacayuran, *Rosario, Cavite*

The Pope had once declared that he would serve up to the end. Let it be!
—Gabriel H. Bordado Jr., *Naga City*

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Cop tags boss in radioman's slay

LUCENA CITY—The police chief of Quezon province had allegedly ordered the assassination of a local radio broadcaster, an awarded Lucena City police officer disclosed in a radio interview here yesterday.

SPO3 Rizaldy Mendoza, chief of the Lucena police warrant section, said Senior Supt. Leo Kison, director of the Quezon provincial police office, allegedly ordered him sometime in June last year to liquidate Jun Mendeja, a radio commentator of dzLT-AM here in Lucena.

Kison vehemently denied the allegation.

"I never wish any harm against any member of the media profession. I respect them no matter how often I receive brickbats from some of them. I still understand them," he said in a mobile phone interview.

"Besides, there is no logic that someone would entrust a sensitive job like that to one that he don't have trust (in)," Kison said.

Silence

"He asked me to silence Jun Mendeja," Mendoza said in Filipino in an interview by Tito Ojeda, owner of ConAmor Broadcasting Corp., which operates dwTI-AM-dwKi-FM-Channel 8 and which has broadcast stations in nearby Pagbilao town.

The policeman, who was awarded as one of the best five cops in this city last year, said Kison gave his order to him inside the police official's office in Camp Nakar.

Two weeks later, Mendoza said Kison called him again in his cell phone and repeated his order, this time explicitly: "to kill Mendeja!"

The police official had always been the target of scathing commentaries by Mendeja.

In the same radio interview, Mendeja said he believed Mendoza's exposé.

He said he had already asked his lawyer to file the corresponding criminal charges against Kison.

Kison pointed out that Mendoza was just trying to get back at him after he recommended on Jan. 20 that the policeman undergo the Taba (Tamad, Abusado, Bastos at Ayaw madisiplina) police reformatory training in Subic.

"He was now weaving fantastic tales," Kison said.

He added that a certain Evelyn Triviño, a Lucena City auditor from the Commission on Audit, had formally filed a complaint against Mendoza for alleged death threats against her.

Kison also said Mendoza, who was relieved as head of the police sub-station in the coastal village of Dalahican, had also been the subject of formal complaints by at least three fish brokers due to his alleged mulcting activities.

But Mendoza turned the table on Kison.

He said a known trusted man of Kison approached him sometime in January last year and ordered him to regularly provide at least eight styrofor boxes of assorted first class fish every month.

Mendoza said he was told that the fish would be distributed to Kison's superiors in Camp Crame.

Bagman

He identified Kison's alleged "bagman," as a certain PO3 Nelson Panganiban now assigned to the Laguna Provincial Police Office.

But Kison dismissed Mendoza's charges as "baseless and just malicious lies."

"I can buy fish anytime. Besides, there is no Panganiban in the roster of the Quezon police," he explained. *Delfin T. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

REM ZAMORA

EFFECTS OF WAR
Residents of Panamao, Sulu, watch over bags of different goods handed to them by the Department of Social Welfare and Development in an effort to provide relief to villagers displaced by fighting between followers of jailed Moro leader Nur Misuari and government soldiers.

House probe of ₱120-M Bohol irrigation scam sought

By Chito A. Fuentes
PDI Visayas Bureau

TAGBILARAN CITY—A resolution has been filed in Congress to open an investigation of the controversial P120-million small reservoir irrigation project (SRIP) in the town of Talibon in Bohol.

House Bill No. 584 seeks to direct the appropriate committee in the House to conduct an investigation, in aid of legislation, on the reported irregularities and anomaly in the construction of the Talibon SRIP in Barangay Zamora.

The bill, filed on Feb. 9, was signed by party-list Representatives Rafael Mariano and Crispin Beltran of Anakpawis, Satur Ocampo, Teodoro Casiño and Joel Virador of Bayan Muna and Liza Maza of Gabriela.

According to the resolution, the Bohol provincial government in 1987, then headed by Gov. Constancio Torralba, ordered a survey to determine the feasibility of building a dam to address the irrigation needs of the towns of Talibon and Bien Unido.

Despite the findings of the feasibility study that the contemplated project was not viable, provincial irrigation officer Calixto Seroje still recommended the construction of the Talibon dam.

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ARMM port exec slain

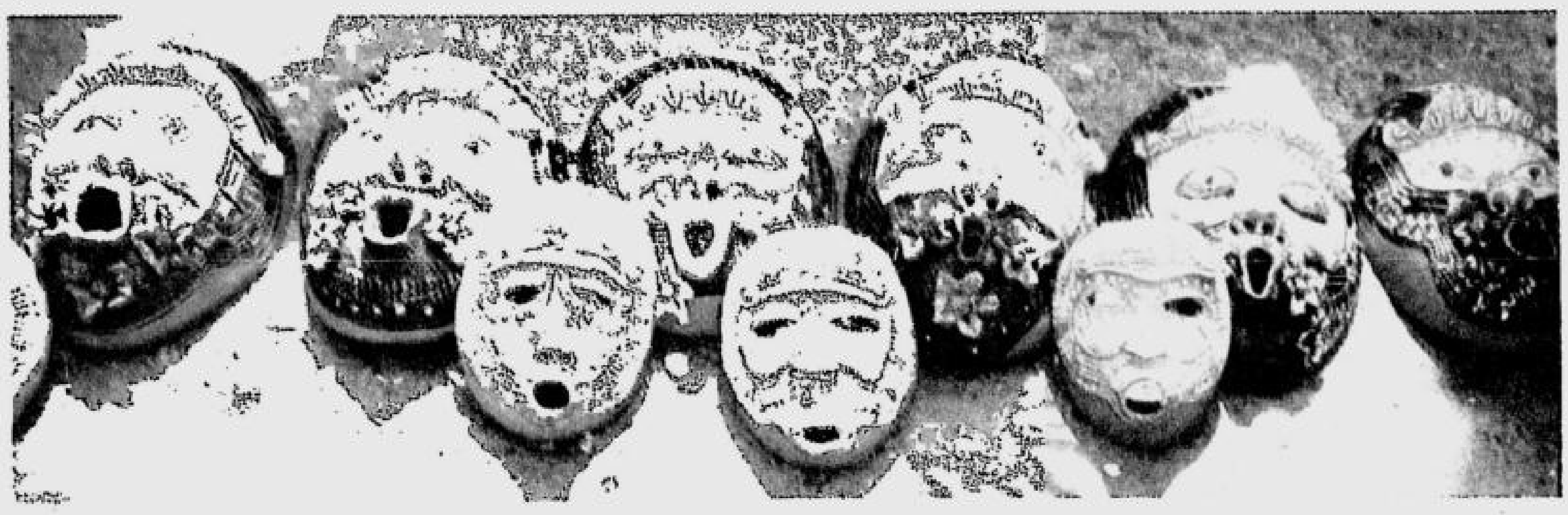
By Edwin O. Fernandez
PDI Mindanao Bureau

COTABATO CITY—Unidentified men shot dead here yesterday a ranking official of the Regional Ports Authority (RPA) in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

Senior Insp. Roger Legazpi, chief of police station No. 2, identified the victim as Murshid Tutuh, RPA general manager, of San Pablo Village, this city.

According to Legazpi, Tutuh had just arrived at the RPA office on Gonzalo Javier Street at around 9 a.m. when two men in a motorcycle shot and killed him with .45 cal. pistols.

Tutuh suffered three bullet wounds in various parts of the body and died on the spot.



THE MASKS for sale for aid to other meningo-stricken areas.
VINCENT CABREZA/PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

Meningo masks on sale to help other towns

BAGUIO CITY—Meningococcemia may be a thing of the past for most city residents, but a Baguio-based artist wants them to help other towns, which are now being terrorized by the fatal meningitis strain.

Edgardo Espiritu exhibited samples of his "meningo masks" at the end of the Baguio Flower Festival to raise money for meningococcemia victims here and in the interior towns of the Cordillera.

Espiritu said the disease hit the poorest of the poor in the region.

"I have been studying the data on meningococcemia and I didn't see any casualty with a bank account that is sufficient to buy the expensive antibiotic medicine [much less the much desired vaccine]," he said.

The World Health Organization, which monitored the meningococcemia fluctuation in the summer capital, also noted that no foreigners or rich folk suffered the illness, although it could not establish a pattern, said Dr. Antonio Bautista, spokesperson of the Department of Health in Cordillera.

Affected towns, such as Itogon in Benguet, already complained of fund discrepancies because it received far less support from health officials when its residents were hit by the disease, compared to the financing that backed Baguio's health care programs.

But the DOH is already seeking other options for combating meningococcemia, as well as equally fatal diseases, because the national budget for 2005 has eliminated most of the allocations for buying vital drugs, Bautista said.

An inter-agency memorandum also prohibits local line agencies from taxing their small budgets by buying more drugs, he added.

The Cordillera Regional Development Council has started to study the impact of the budget on health care.

Last year, people stayed away from Baguio residents who exhibited various stages of influenza for fear of meningococcemia contamination. *Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Governor stops treasure hunting

BULAN, Sorsogon—Gov. Raul Lee has ordered an immediate stop to treasure hunting at Barangay Gate in this town, which was reportedly secured by several soldiers and policemen.

Lee said the treasure hunters did not have any permit from concerned government agencies and should discontinue their diggings.

Late last week, the governor received reports of indiscriminate firing by military men and police personnel guarding the area where the excavations were being conducted.

Lee immediately called up Lt. Col. Ernesto Pascual, head of the Army's 2nd Infantry Battalion, whose men were allegedly among those securing the treasure hunting area.

The governor asked Pascual to look into the incident and ensure that peace and order were maintained.

He also ordered Senior Supt. Arnold Revilla, provincial police director, to pull out the policemen guards.

Both Pascual and Revilla promised to recall their men from the area.

Earlier, police reported that members of the communist New People's Army harassed their men, triggering a gunfight.

Local witnesses, however, revealed that some military and police personnel indiscriminately fired their guns to scare away curious residents who flocked to the area.

It was learned that several members of the town police were moonlighting as security personnel for the treasure hunters.

It was not clear what kind of treasures were being excavated, but there were persistent reports of treasures left by Japanese general Yamashita during the last world war. *Bobby Labalan, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

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INQBOX Question of the Week

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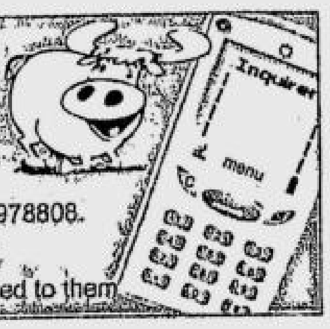


GUNNER AFP

A soldier carrying his machinegun awaits orders following the takeover by government forces of a camp where followers of jailed Moro leader Nur Misuari had holed up in Panamao, Sulu.

Dad's past decree haunts GMA in tribes' land claim

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—President Macapagal-Arroyo has instructed the Department of National Defense and the Department of Land Reform to address the ownership claim of an indigenous group on Panay Island over a 33,310-hectare land declared a military reservation by her father, the late President Diosdado Macapagal.

"Since the secretary of national defense (Avelino Cruz Jr.) is a lawyer, we could have this issue looked upon (by Cruz). *Dahil ang mga bagay na ito ay hindi naman* (Since these things are not) combat operations, this should be decided on the level of civilian authorities," the President told reporters during her visit in Capiz last week.

The Tumandok communities, the largest indigenous group inhabiting Panay, are found inside a 33,310-hectare military reservation that covers 23 barangays and eight sitios in Jamindan and Tapaz towns in Capiz.

The group, also called Sulodnon and Bukidnon by scholars, wants to reclaim the area, which they consider their ancestral land.

The group is considered the oldest community on Panay Island. They are known for their rich oral literature that has gained international recognition. Anthropologists have recorded nine epics chanted for at least 162 hours. The epics, according to studies, provide insights into the history, psyche and culture of pre-Hispanic Panay Bisayans.

In 1962, the late President Diosdado Macapagal issued Proclamation 67, declaring the area a military reservation. The Camp Macario Peralta, the headquarters Army's 3rd Infantry Division (3ID), is located inside the military reservation.

For years, the Tumandoks have called for the repeal of the proclamation and the return of the land to their people.

Land Reform Secretary Rene Villa has instructed the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), which is under his office, to submit its proposals on the claim.

He said his office and the Department of National Defense will then determine the claim for the Tumandoks' ancestral domain.

Villa told the INQUIRER that the issue should be settled between the DLR and DND because military officials are resisting the claims.

"But it is a big area and we are optimistic that at least a portion could be given to the indigenous people," Villa said.

Around 100 members of the community, along with members of militant groups, trooped to the 3rd ID headquarters in Jamindan on March 2 to air their claims but soldiers prevented them from getting near the camp.

The protesters held a rally at the barangay hall of Jaena Sur, around 3 km from the military camp.

They are set to hold their 5th tribal people's assembly on March 11-13 in Barangay Katipunan in Tapaz.

Town execs require tree-planting before marriage

LINGAYEN, Pangasinan—Officials in two towns in Pangasinan have enacted ordinances requiring applicants for marriage licenses to plant trees, especially fruit bearing ones.

The ordinances, which were submitted for review and approval of the provincial board, were passed by the municipal councils of San Jacinto and Asingan.

Saplings, according to the ordinances, will come from the municipal nurseries or the couple may choose to secure saplings on their own.

Before couples are issued a license, they should first get a "certificate of compliance" from their village head, the ordinances said.

Councilor Samuel Abaoag of San Jacinto, author of the ordinance in the town, said he started the "plant before marriage" project in his village of Lobong, where he served as barangay captain for 15 years.

Abaoag, an agriculturist, said his village's roadsides are full of all kinds of trees. He said fruit-bearing trees that couples in his village had planted benefit their children who enjoy picking fruits.

Through the project, even empty private lands in Lobong have been planted with trees like mahogany, narra, star apple and atis, among others, he said.

"It's a two-pronged project, you protect the environment and help in producing food," Abaoag added. *Yolanda Sotelo-Fuertes, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Team sent to double-check gun, slay raps vs Abra execs

BAGUIO CITY—Interior and Local Government Secretary Angelo Reyes has sent a validation team to the Cordillera for a second look at the government's pending gunrunning and murder cases against Abra's elected officials.

Reyes gave the team five days to determine whether the government could start issuing warrants against them, a member of the team told the INQUIRER on Thursday.

Topping that list is Abra Gov. Vicente Valera, the source said.

The investigation, according to the source, was triggered by the supposed confession of a soldier that Valera hired Army Lt. Col. Noel Mislang, commander of the Army's 41st Infantry Battalion in Lagangilang town, to kill Lagayan Mayor Cecilia Luna in April last year.

Cpl. Eduardo Barcelona, the soldier who gave this testimony, is in hiding after surviving a Dec. 22, 2004, ambush that killed Cpl. Antonio Rosqueta, another of Mislang's alleged assassination squad recruits.

Army officials relieved Mislang and put him under restriction in the military's 5th Infantry Division camp in Isabela after the exposé.

Valera denied Barcelona's accusations in previous interviews, but he said the charges have now placed him in grave danger.

Valera, in a telephone interview on Thursday, said "hit men are already here (Abra) to liquidate me even before the fiesta of Bangued, that's why the police and the military have been [on alert]."

Luna and the Department of Justice were prepared to separately sue Valera before the Office of the Ombudsman, but they were forced to delay their legal action because of Barcelona's absence, according to the source.

Commissioner Miguel Coronel of the National Police Commission was designated head of the probe team, according to a press statement issued by Reyes' office on Wednesday. Joining him in the team were lawyer Rodolfo Santos Jr., Napolcom Cordillera director; Everdina Doctor, Cordillera director of the Department of the Interior and Local Government; and Chief Supt. Jesus Versoza, Cordillera police director.

The team is evaluating Versoza's report on Abra's political crisis, which he presented to Director General Edgardo Aglipay, Philippine National Police chief, in February. *Vincent Cabreza, Frank Cimatu and Artha Kira Paredes, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Remains of cult head's wife exhumed

By Jolene R. Bulambot
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—A group of forensic experts yesterday exhumed the three-year-old cadaver of Alona Bacolod-Ecleo, wife of cult leader Ruben Ecleo Jr., who now stands accused of killing her.

The exhumation was conducted at the Cebu South Memorial Gardens in Talisay City, Cebu, past 11 a.m. in the presence of Judge Geraldine Econg, siblings of Alona, private prosecutors, defense lawyers and member of the Crusade Against Violence.

Among those who examined the body were Dr. Raquel Fortun of the University of the Philippines in Diliman; Dr. Rene Cam of the National Bureau of Investigation in Central Visayas, and Aida Pagulayan, chief of the NBI forensic division and another forensic expert from Camp Crame.

The cadaver was then brought and examined at the St. Francis Funeral Homes along Natalio Bacalso Avenue. The forensic experts also took specimens, which would then be subjected to a DNA test analysis in Manila.

Fortun told reporters that she would bring the samples to the DNA test laboratory of the National Sciences Research Institute of UP Diliman.

She said the DNA test analysis might take a couple of weeks. Aside from this, she would also examine the bones and dental features of the corpse and would probably determine the cause of death.

Judge Econg also told reporters that the forensic experts would take blood samples from the Bacolod siblings, which would be compared to the samples taken from the remains.

Econg granted the request of the prosecutors to exhume and examine the remains buried in the Talisay to put to rest question about its identity.

Last Feb. 15, the prosecutor's team, composed of officers of the Integrated Bar of the Philippines (IBP), filed the motion to exhume Alona's remains after the defense refused to admit during the case's pre-trial conference that the body recovered in Barangay Coro, Dalaguete town belonged to Alona.

Orlando Salatandre, lawyer of Ecleo, said they welcomed the exhumation and the DNA test, saying this would help resolve the issue about the identity of the recovered corpse in Dalaguete, about 85 km south of this city.

Ecleo, the supreme master of the Philippine Benevolent Missionaries Association, is facing parricide charges for allegedly killing his wife in January 2002.

He has been out on a P1-million bail since last year to allow him to get medical help for his heart ailment.

Iloilo transport disrupted as drivers stage strike

By Nestor P. Burgos Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—Public transport was disrupted in the province and city of Iloilo in the first day of a scheduled two-day strike of transport groups against an ordinance prohibiting the entry of public jeepneys and buses in the city.

The strike mostly affected the southern and central towns of Iloilo after an estimated 90 percent of public jeepneys in these routes stayed off the streets, said Jun Abellon, coordinator of the Pinag-isang Samahan ng mga Tsuper at Operator Nationwide (Piston) in Panay.

Around 30 percent of public transportation in routes between the city and the northern towns of the province was also affected by the strike.

But public transport in the city was hardly affected, as jeepneys plying the city's major routes did not join the strike. Classes continued and offices and business establishments in the city were open.

Protesters, led by the multisectoral alliance Pumuluyo Kontra PBO (Perimeter Boundary Ordinance), massed up in protest centers in key intersections of the city.

Under the ordinance, provincial jeepneys and buses are restricted to privately owned terminals located at the outskirts of the city.

The ordinance, implemented on Feb. 16, is aimed at regulating traffic in the city.

But those opposing the ordinance are calling for its repeal, claiming that the ordinance has failed to solve the traffic problem of the city.

Abellon, of Piston-Panay, said the streets that usually experience traffic jams are not used by provincial buses and jeepneys.

He said private vehicles, not public transportation, are the main causes of traffic in the city.

Quoting data from the Land Transportation Office, Abellon pointed out that provincial buses and jeepneys comprise only about 13.8 percent of vehicles that used the city's streets.

The protesters said commuters pay an additional P8 per day for an extra jeepney ride because of the ordinance.

Instead of the PBO, they are calling for the strict implementation of existing traffic ordinances, especially the ban on parking on busy streets and the implementation of a color-coding scheme to regulate both private and publicly owned vehicles.

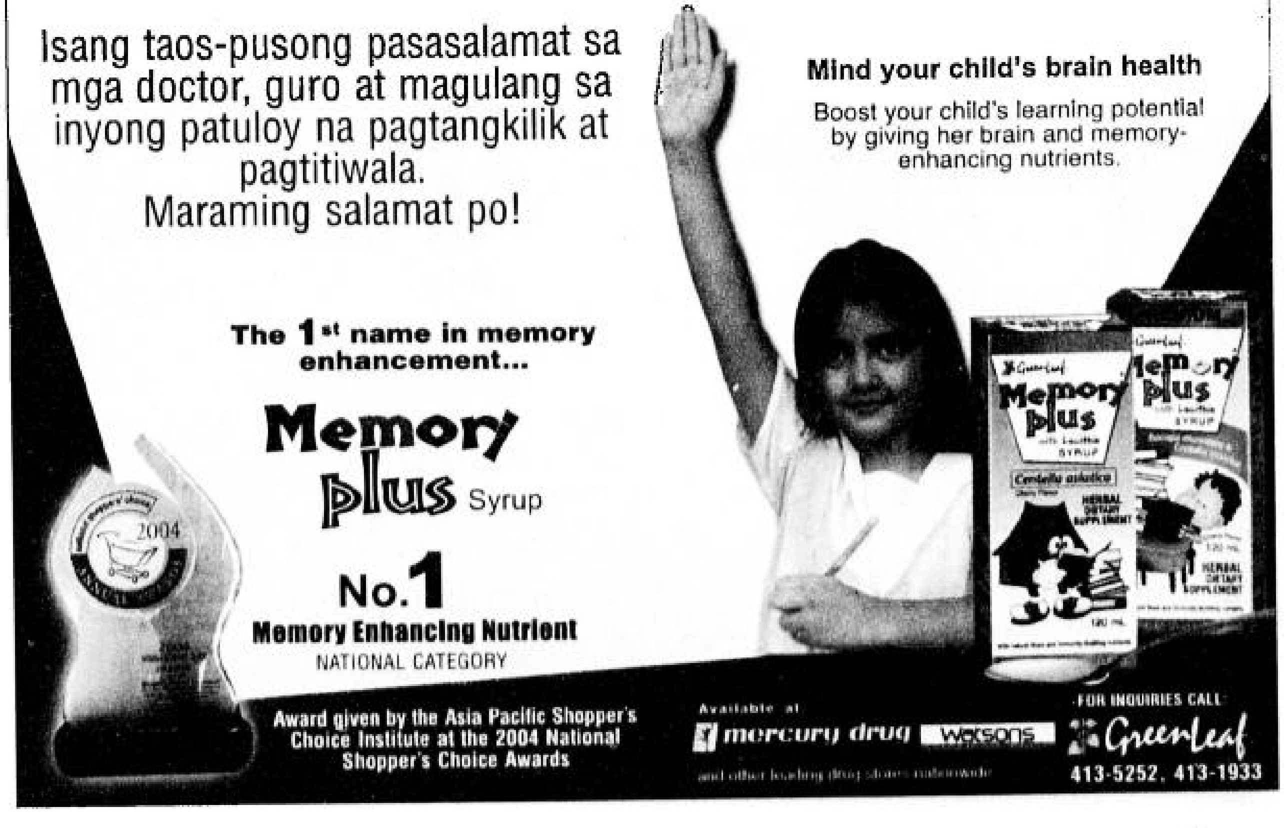
To limit the number of public jeepneys in the city, they also want the issuance of new franchises stopped.

But Iloilo City Mayor Jerry Treñas said he will continue implementing the ordinance despite the protest of transport groups.

HER EXCELLENCY GLORIA MACAPAGAL ARROYO
Seaweed Harvest Festival And Commercial Trading
SECURITY

SEAWEED HARVEST CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Malcolm Sarmiento Jr. (center), director of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources, and Mayor Angelita Jimenez of Dasol, Pangasinan, lead a ceremonial harvest of seaweeds in Dasol to prove that seaweed culture is feasible in areas not known previously as seaweed-growing.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HERBAL DIETARY SUPPLEMENT

Lawmakers press full implementation of pro-women laws

By Michael Lim Ubac

DESPITE the country having a woman president, Akbayan Rep. Risa Hontiveros yesterday said the gains advancing women's rights in the past were now being "threatened by the half-hearted" implementation of women's laws.

Domestic violence is at an all-time high, the sexual health of women continues to be neglected and men still occupy the majority of appointed positions in government, noted Hontiveros.

In the area of legislation, Hontiveros and Rep. Imee Marcos lamented that only two pro-women's laws were enacted in the past nine years (Anti-Trafficking of Persons Act and the Violence Against Women and Children), while about a dozen bills remained pending in Congress.

Hontiveros said that since the "marginalization of women" had many expressions—from sexual health to political harassment—new laws such as the reproductive gender quota and anti-prostitution bills must be introduced and enacted to further women's rights.

She said Ms Arroyo should "think like a mother" for her to understand the sufferings of women under her leadership.

"There's something tragic and ironic about commemorating Women's Month and the 100th year of feminism, (while having) a woman president whose track record on women's rights is dismal," she said.

Gabriela Rep. Liza Maza pushed for the passage of House Bill No. 1020 which sought to declare Nov. 25 of every year "National Consciousness Day For the Elimination of Violence Against Women."

In a privilege speech, Maza said the 2005 national budget and proposed two-percentage point increase in the value-added tax and the lifting of VAT exemptions "all translate to more hardships for women" because they "will result in increases of the prices of goods and services, to the detriment of many Filipino women and their families."

Besides VAT-related laws, Maza said the 2005 budget failed to address the need for social services, such as housing, health and education.

As mainstays of their household, she said women would particularly bear the burden of defending their homes and eventually finding resettlement for the family.

For her part, Marcos said that while HB 1020 had passed the committee level, HB 3773 dealing with reproductive health and population management, which incorporated House Bill Nos. 16, 2029, 2042, 2550, was still pending in the committee level.

Marcos blamed this on the small number of women-legislators in Congress, noting that only 37 of the 236 House members were women.

"If you look closely, 199 are male legislators: I'm not saying that the boys in the House are not supportive of us, but it will be a different (ballgame) if the girls are the majority, isn't it?" said Marcos.

4 women . . .

From page A1

Jose, Batangas, who placed 3rd; Ludwig Salvador of Taytay, Rizal, 7th; Paul Ramos of Baguio City, 8th, and Rimando Estrada, 9th.

President Macapagal-Arroyo, the graduation speaker, will be appointing the members of PMA "Sanlingan" Class of 2005 as officers under the shadow of a scandal.

Proving their worth

Lt. Gen. Cristolito Balaoing, PMA superintendent, said the academy was conscious of legal problems affecting last year's top cadet when they selected this year's top graduates.

2nd Lt. Rolly Joaquin, who topped PMA "Maliyab" Class of 2004, was expelled from the Army Infantry School at Fort Benning in Georgia last year when he was accused of shoplifting. He was undergoing an officer training course there.

This time, Balaoing said, officials spent a longer time studying the character profiles of each cadet before releasing this year's list of graduates.

Rayton acknowledged more pressure on his class to "prove their worth to the republic" because of the Joaquin case.

Women and wisdom

"We share the shame [that was endured] by our fellow alumni [members who were caught in scandals]," Brig. Gen. Francisco Gudani, PMA assistant superintendent, said.

But he said the PMA was confident that the "Sanlingan" Class of 2005 would disprove critics who say the academy is in a state of decay. The PMA is still the top academic institution in the country, he said.

"Sanlingan" is Filipino for wisdom and the top four women in batch 2005 reflect this.

TOOTS SOBERANO/PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

PMA'S Top 10 (from left): Marjorie Mukay, 10th; Rimando Estrada, ninth; Paul Ramos, eighth; Ludwig Salvador, seventh; Deodelyn Aguilar, sixth; Carol Ena Sabijon, fifth; Geraldine Albano Haller, fourth; Michael Angelo Patron, third; Antonio Gabalane Bulao I, second, and Brian Cera Bayton, first.

Hallar, Mukay and Sabijon, who is also graduating cum laude, all chose to join the Air Force. Aguilar elected to serve the Army in Mindanao.

Hallar, 22, whose parents are both school teachers in Bacarra, said she lived by the advice of her father to have faith, perseverance and courage.

Pretty and articulate, she said it had always been her dream to fly. "My father always told me: When you do your best, success will follow," she said.

She said it was her interest in the military and "probably my youthful idealism" that made her join the PMA.

Choosing PMA

Aguilar, whose idol is Army Capt. Leah Lorenzo, summa cum laude of the trailblazing "Kalasag-Lahi" Class of 1997, said women in their batch relied on their own buddy system to support each other.

A daughter of a vegetable farmer, Aguilar, 21, wanted to be a flight attendant and only took the PMA entrance exam because an uncle encouraged her to do so.

She chose the Army because there are more opportunities there for a female soldier, she said.

She added that she wanted to be in the front line in Mindanao because she thought this was more exciting.

Hallar and Aguilar admitted to having boyfriends among the cadets.

Working their way

Sabijon, 23, whose parents were both Air Force officers, wanted to become a pilot. Before joining the PMA, she took three semesters of a computer science course at the University of the Philippines in Diliman.

Mukay, 23, said she joined the PMA partly for financial reasons. "My father is a [rice] farmer and since I'm the second of six children, I decided to forego my dream of becoming a doctor and joined the PMA."

According to Brig. Gen. Leopoldo Maligalig, PMA commandant of cadets, most of the cadets attended the academy for economic reasons.

"There is one cadet who, worked as a carpenter to pay his way through high school. On Saturday, he will be one of the graduates," Maligalig said.

Broadcast . . .

From page A1

It will be revised "to include appropriate sanctions as well as safeguards regarding interviews with terrorist groups," he added.

Security of state

For the time being, Nicdao reminded members that "the franchises given to us by Congress are laws that contain a provision that you should never allow the security of the state to be jeopardized."

But he also urged the military leadership to hold regular dialogues with broadcast executives and to specify which armed groups with political objectives should be considered "terrorist groups."

He cited the case of the communist New People's Army with which the government had been holding peace talks until the negotiations were suspended last year.

Malacañang position

"Is the NPA a terrorist group? It is not clear to the public if it is a political group or a terrorist group," Nicdao said.

The Armed Forces had complained about broadcast networks giving air time to the NPA and the bandit group Abu Sayyaf, both considered by the United States as "foreign terrorist organizations."

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye said the KBP should police its own ranks when it came to interviewing known terrorists rather than coming up with a law that would provide stiff penalties against media organizations.

Bunye said he found "well meaning" the proposal of Armed Forces Deputy Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Edilberto Adan's for stiff penalties against media outfits interviewing terrorists but noted that "there are some realities that we have to contend with."

Security and media needs

"We have to balance the requirements of security and the requirements of access to information," Bunye told reporters.

He said that was why he preferred the KBP to be "more proactive."

With the intervention of the KBP, he said its members could be guided on the "limits and what was needed based on our situation."

"I believe the KBP can assist in accomplishing what General Adan wishes to accomplish through his proposal," Bunye added.

The KBP, he said, could be "an effective mechanism for attaining the objectives of security and have balanced information."

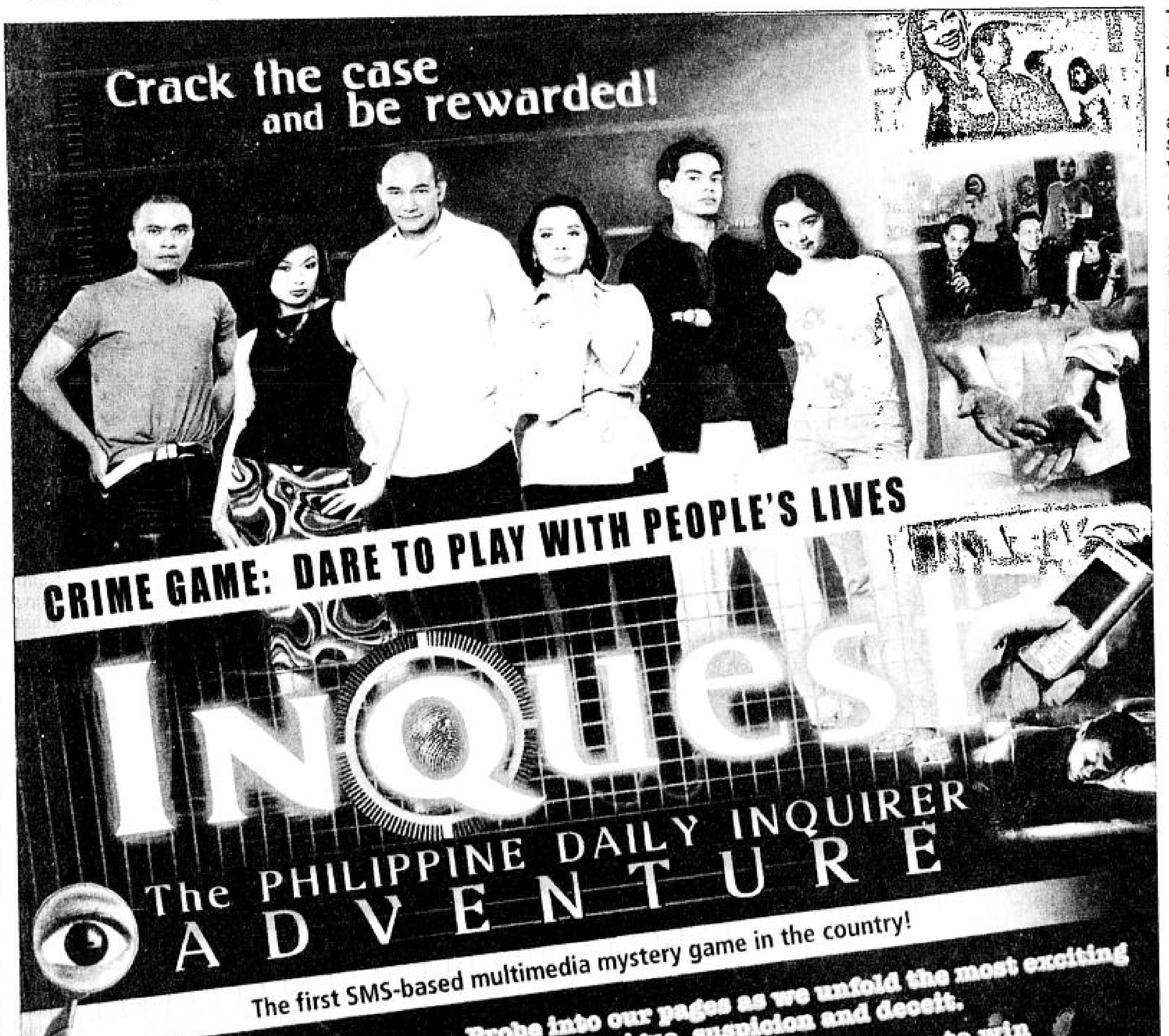
Sedition laws

Asked who would police non-KBP members, Bunye said there was the National Telecommunications Commission, which is in charge of all broadcast outfits.

In a radio interview, Bunye said he felt that the NTC regulation issued in the aftermath of the military coup attempts in 1989 was sufficient to address the problem.

He said the NTC regulation prohibited the airing of interviews with people whose messages tended to border on sedition.

Bunye said he was not aware of any regulations that restricted the print media, except the Revised Penal Code, which punishes acts of sedition. *With reports from AFP, Marinel Cruz, Christine O. Avendaño and Luige A. del Puerto*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2. Send to 2320 for Globe/Touch Mobile and Sun Cellular subscribers or 309 for Smart/Addict/Talk 'N Text subscribers. Free registration.
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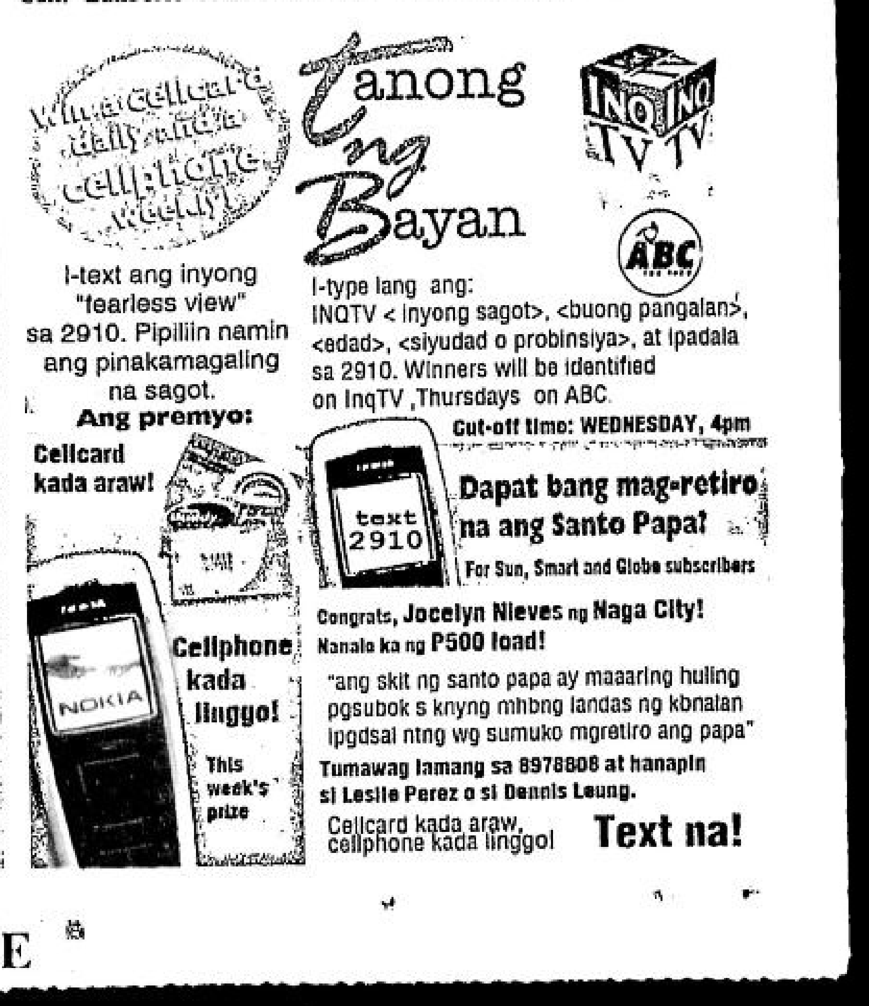
The Game:

1. Buy a copy of the Philippine Daily Inquirer to follow the INQuest Adventure Mystery and guess the answer to the questions found at the end of the chapter installments.
2. To help you answer the questions, clues can be found in various sections in Philippine Daily Inquirer, INQuest website or INQTV (every Thursdays, 8 to 9pm at ABC5). To answer, text in this format: INQ Q<question #> <answer> and so on Ex: INQ Q1 A
3. Participant is allowed a maximum of three (3) answers per question. Each text answer entitles the participant one (1) raffle entry to qualify for the preliminary draws.
4. For each successful text sent, participants will receive a confirmation message. The cost for each successful message sent is P2.50 for Globe/Touch Mobile/Smart/Addict and Talk 'N Text subscribers and P2.00 for Sun Cellular subscribers
5. There will be a total of eight (8) preliminary draws (1 winner each) and one (1) final draw (5 winners). There will only be one (1) winner per question (preliminary draw) but an individual may win again in the succeeding preliminary draws. Final draw winner can only win once.

Clue	Clue Date	Cut-Off	Draw	Bonus Prizes for Correct Answers
Q1	March 9	March 12	March 14	Apple iPod 512MB
Q2	March 16	March 19	March 28	Canon PowerShot A75
Q3	March 23	March 30	April 4	Apple iPod 20GB
Q4	March 31	April 2	April 4	Canon PowerShot A75
Q5	April 5	April 8	April 11	Apple iPod 20GB
Q6	April 10	April 16	April 18	Canon PowerShot A75
Q7	April 17	April 23	April 25	Apple iPod 20GB
Q8	April 24	April 30	May 2	Canon PowerShot A75
Q9	May 1	May 7	May 9	5 x P20,000.00 Cash

6. The winner drawn from the preliminary draw (Q1-Q8) automatically gets to win a Guyito doll. An additional prize (Apple iPod or Canon Digicam) is given if he/she sent a correct answer.
7. The five (5) entries drawn for the final draw (Q9) will automatically receive a cash prize of P20,000.00 cash. An additional P80,000.00 cash prize will be given to those with correct answer.
8. Winners will be notified thru registered mail and names will also be published two (2) days after the draw.
9. Metro Manila preliminary and final draw winners must claim their prizes at the PDI office located at: Chino Roces Ave. cor. Yague and Mascardo Sts., Makati City.
10. Provincial preliminary draw winners have the option of either claiming their prize in person at the PDI office or have the prize sent to them via courier service. Allow 2-3 weeks for delivery.
11. The following must be presented for verification:
    a. Valid ID with picture (e.g., driver's license, passport, employee ID)
    b. In case valid IDs do not indicate birthdate/age, present a birth certificate
    c. Copy of PDI's notification/confirmation letter
    d. PDI mast head (including date) taken from issue where question was published
12. Prizes must be claimed within sixty (60) days after receipt of confirmation letter. Unclaimed prizes will be forfeited in favor of PDI with prior DTI approval.
13. All prizes are tax-free, not transferable and not convertible to cash.
14. The winners declared by PDI, DTI and its representatives are final.
15. All employees of PDI Group of Companies, sponsors of INQuest, their advertising agencies/third party suppliers and their relatives up to the third degree of consanguinity or affinity are disqualified from joining the promo.
16. Promo period is from March 2 to May 7, 2005.

Per DTI-NCR Permit # 1123, Series of 2005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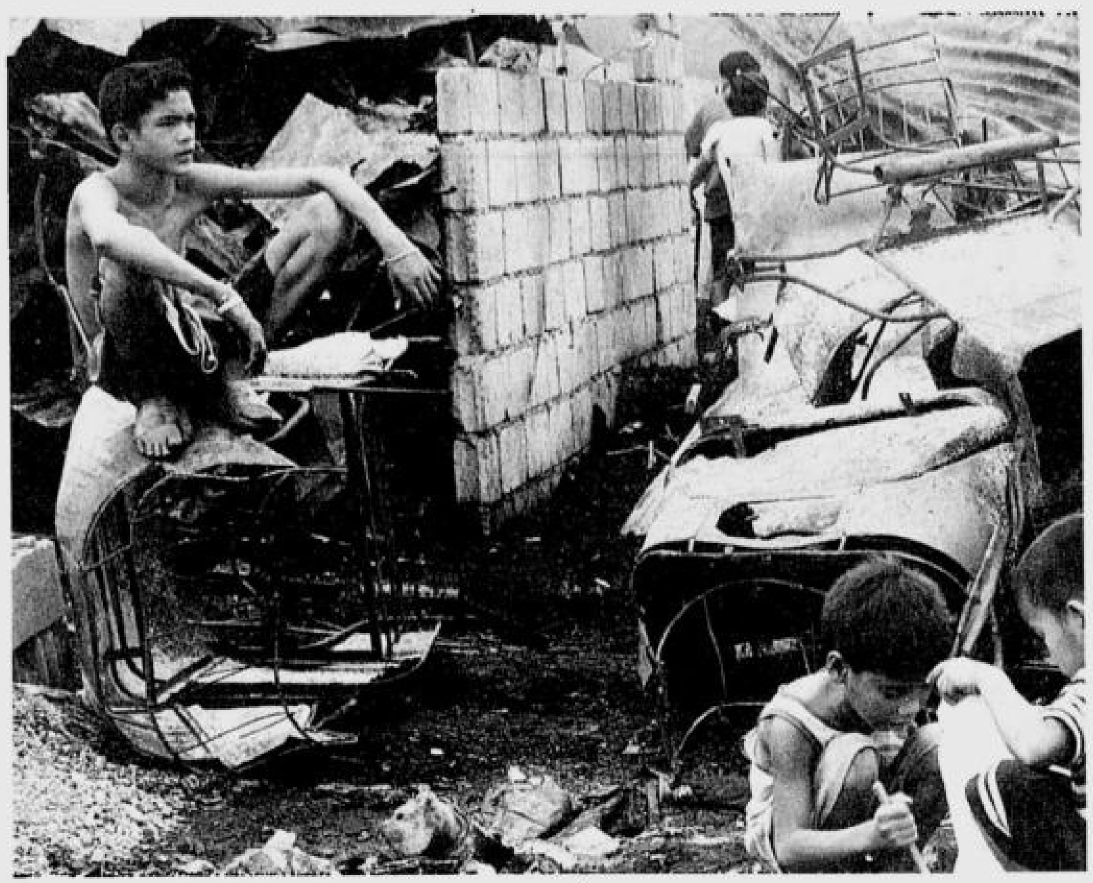


REMAINS OF THE DAY
Victims of a fire along Agham Road in Quezon City last Sunday sift through the charred remains of their homes for items that could still be of use. MITCH MAURICIO

More pink fences up on Edsa, if...

By Tarra V. Quismundo

FENCE it all the way if necessary.

This is what the Metropolitan Manila Development Authority (MMDA) plans to do along Edsa, if bus drivers and the riding public persist in ignoring designated loading and unloading areas, thereby creating monstrous traffic jams on the major thoroughfare.

"We will put up steel fences all the way if we can't control stubborn drivers and commuters," MMDA Chair Bayani Fernando told reporters yesterday.

Fernando said that even while the MMDA had assigned yellow lanes for the exclusive use of intercity passenger buses along Edsa, drivers continued to avoid these designated areas. Hard-headed commuters, meanwhile, insisted on getting off buses wherever they wanted to, including prohibited stops.

"They would even jump off the bus or get mad at the driver for not letting them get off. That's why we really need to put physical barriers," said Fernando.

The MMDA, said Fernando, aimed to make fast lanes out of the three inner lanes of the five-lane Edsa, where traffic moves at an average of 25 kph because of vehicle volume, and the loading and unloading of public utility vehicles.

But if buses are kept in the two outer lanes, where they could pick up and drop off passengers on the sidewalks and passenger bays, driving could become hassle-free along the inner lanes, he added.

On an average day, Edsa hosts some 107,000 bus trips and 713,000 trips of private vehicles. Part of the effort to improve travel speed along Edsa is the planned extension of the Santolan and Kamuning flyovers, that are currently on the drawing board, said Fernando.

The MMDA has already put up pink fences in certain portions along Edsa, Metro Manila's main artery where some 3,000 buses bring passengers bound for the southern areas of Alabang and Parañaque, and northern destinations such as Fairview in Quezon City and Monumento in Caloocan.

The fences, steel barricades almost as high as the typical intercity bus, now limit passenger buses to yellow lanes on the busy portions of Edsa such as the southbound portion of the avenue fronting Camp Crame, near Santolan Street, near P. Tuazon Street in the Cubao area, and in front of Cubao's bus terminals near Farmer's Plaza.

The barricades had portions where light vehicles, which had no access establishments along Edsa separated by steel fences, could drive into or exit through. Fernando said buses still tried to exit through these slots just to escape the fences, even if the exit slots were only high enough for light vehicles.

Those found ignoring the pink fences, or taking their rides in prohibited areas could face fines of at least P150.

Cop murder suspect slain

By D.J. Yap

THE MAN suspected of murdering the police escort of his wife last month was killed the other day in Cubao after a shootout with Quezon City police intelligence operatives.

Suspected drug pusher Rizaldy Bueza, principal suspect in the murder of SPO1 Vicente de Leon, was killed in front of Ali Mall after he allegedly fired at pursuing policemen. His wife Elena was nabbed and brought to Camp Karingal.

Elena, however, belied police statements that her husband was killed in a shootout. "My husband did not have a gun," she said.

She said her husband was fleeing and not shooting at the police when he was killed.

Bueza, 27, reportedly murdered de Leon on Feb. 26. The policeman brought Elena, detained on drug pushing charges, to the hospital because she was in pain. On the way back, the two stopped at Bueza's house in Barangay Baesa, where the policeman was killed. After allegedly killing de Leon, Bueze and his wife fled, police said.

Yesterday, the couple, with another person, boarded an Alps bus for Batangas. Bueza reportedly sensed he was being watched and got off the bus, leaving his wife, police said.

When operatives pursued him, Bueza allegedly opened fire. The policemen returned fire, killing him, said Chief Supt. Nicasio Radovan Jr.

Bueza sustained about four gunshot wounds, including one on the head, said Radovan. The operatives recovered a .38 snubnosed revolver from the suspect, he added. Elena was caught with a certain Lolita Abinujar, who she identified as her sister-in-law.

Radovan said Bueza was also the main suspect in the killing of two other cops: PO3 Ferdinand Castolo, killed on Feb. 2; and a certain SPO2 Fabro, killed last year. Bueza had at least two arrest warrants and was facing charges of murder, homicide and violations of the Dangerous Drugs Act, Radovan said.

Village politics source of woes

By Nikko Dizon

THE BELEAGUERED former president of a subdivision in Parañaque City blames village politics for his problems.

Arnel Gacutan, former president of the Multinational Village Homeowners Association (MVHA), said those who wanted him out used the series of raids on alleged shabu laboratories in the subdivision against him.

"*Saksakan ang galit sa akin. Kung alam niyo lang, malalim ito* (They are very angry with me. If you only knew, the root of the problem was deep)," Gacutan said in an interview at the INQUIRER office Sunday night.

Gacutan cited his group's discovery during his term of over P3.387 million right-of-way payment that was allegedly deposited in private accounts, instead of the MVHA account. Former officers of the association were allegedly involved.

His rivals, he claimed, used against him the raid by the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) in Bulaong Compound in the village in November, where authorities tagged him as the owner of alleged shabu-making equipment seized in another anti-drug raid in late 2003.

Gacutan admitted the issue was raised during the MVHA's elections in January. Some residents, he said, even put up posters maligning him. He vehemently denied allegations of links to a drug syndicate.

The 39-year-old was the subject of an executive session hearing of the House of Representatives' Committee on Dangerous Drugs last week. The committee is looking into the series of anti drug raids in the village.

Gacutan claimed his rivals had the "right connections" with lawmakers. With the drug issue now in Congress, Gacutan said, his rivals had succeeded in their demolition job against him.

Gacutan also belied claims that his was a "rags-to-riches" story. He was not a factory worker, as earlier reported, Gacutan said. From 1986 to 1992, he worked at the Philippine Amusement and Gaming Corp. Gacutan said his family's build-and-sell construction business began in 1990 when they sold for a good profit a house and lot at Bliss Multinational. He sold about 17 houses, he said.

Gacutan dared his accusers to file charges against him instead of subjecting him to a trial by publicity.

End of the road for holdup gang

By Nancy C. Carvajal

AFTER 37 reported cases of robbery and holdup in less than a month, Caloocan City police finally arrested members of a gang victimizing jeepney commuters in Quezon City and Bagong Silang, Caloocan City.

Police said they had in their custody suspects Nilo Dadivas, of Phase 9, Bagong Silang; Anthony Hamon, of Payatas, Quezon City who also used the alias Jonathan, Jesus Obani, and Jay Abanto of Montalban Rizal.

"The group had been a headache to us," according to Senior Supt. Leo Gara, Caloocan City chief of police.

The goup's modus operandi was to ride in jeepneys from different areas in Quezon City and and then hold up its passengers in Bagong Silang where they also get off.

The suspects were nabbed in Barangay Barugo, Bagong Silang, Sunday evening when they jumped out of a passenger jeepney they had just robbed.

The group immediately got off the jeepney when they saw a police checkpoint ahead, a police report said.

"We hope that with their arrest, the incidence of robbery and hold up cases in the area will decrease," Gara said.

Hospital budget a debatable issue

By Edson C. Tandoc Jr.

IT MAY be a small public hospital with a 150-bed capacity. But debates about its budget were enough to delay the passage of the entire San Juan Municipality budget.

Though the municipal council was ready to pass the 2005 municipal budget, some councilors are still questioning appropriations for the San Juan Medical Center at the back of the Municipal Hall. "We are still trying to call the attention of the hospital directors to answer some questions," vice mayor Leonardo Celles told the INQUIRER.

Sought for comment, medical director Lorenzo Hocson said the delay in the budget approval was a puzzle to them. Celles said some councilors had questioned the amount allotted to the salaries of personnel, adding that the hospital was hiring too many consultants. But Hocson said the number of their consultants had not increased since the hospital became fully operational in 1997.

Last week, the municipal council approved on third reading a draft ordinance appropriating more than P397 million as municipal budget for 2005. But it did not approve the more than P84 million budget for the public hospital. Celles said they hope to pass the entire budget, including that of the hospital on Monday. Hocson said if their budget would not be released on time, they would not be able to buy supplies and pay the salaries of its personnel.

AFP deputy chief would kill bringer of bad news

ON TARGET

Ramon Tulfo

LT. GEN. EDILBERTO Adan, Armed Forces deputy chief of staff, proposed stiffer penalties for reporters who interview people considered "terrorists" by the state, he showed that the government is losing to the enemies of the state the fight for the people's hearts and minds.

In his younger days, Adan must have been *pikon*, one who gets piqued after exchanging taunts with playmates. There's a saying among Filipino kids, "*ang pikon, talo* (one who gets piqued, loses)." Abu showed that he's not calm under fire, a must trait of an effective military leader. In which case, President Macapagal-Arroyo should have him replaced.

* * *

Adan would punish the bearer of bad news, reminiscent of the Middle Ages when the messenger was executed for bringing bad news to the king.

It's not the fault of the journalist if, after interviewing terrorists (see, I go with the government line that persons or groups that kill and maim innocent people are terrorists), the citizenry views the cause of the terrorists in a different light.

It's not the fault of the journalist that the spokesmen for the terrorists are convincing and fire the imagination of the citizenry.

It's the military's fault that some sector of the citizenry sympathizes with the terrorists. That's what the military gets for employing misfits as second-rate spin doctors and spokespersons.

Adan should be told that in a democratic country everybody is allowed to air his views, no matter how crazy such views are. The philosopher Voltaire said, "I may not agree with what you say, but I will defend with my life your right to say it."

* * *

Let's see how newly installed Customs Commissioner Bert Lina deals with the recalcitrant collector of the Cebu port, Billy Bibit.

Bibit had sown terror in the hearts of Lina's predecessors—Titus Villanueva, Antonio Bernardo and George Jereos—in such a way that he was left to do his thing in the ports he was assigned.

The Cebu customs office is an independent republic. Nobody dares touch Bibit's territory.

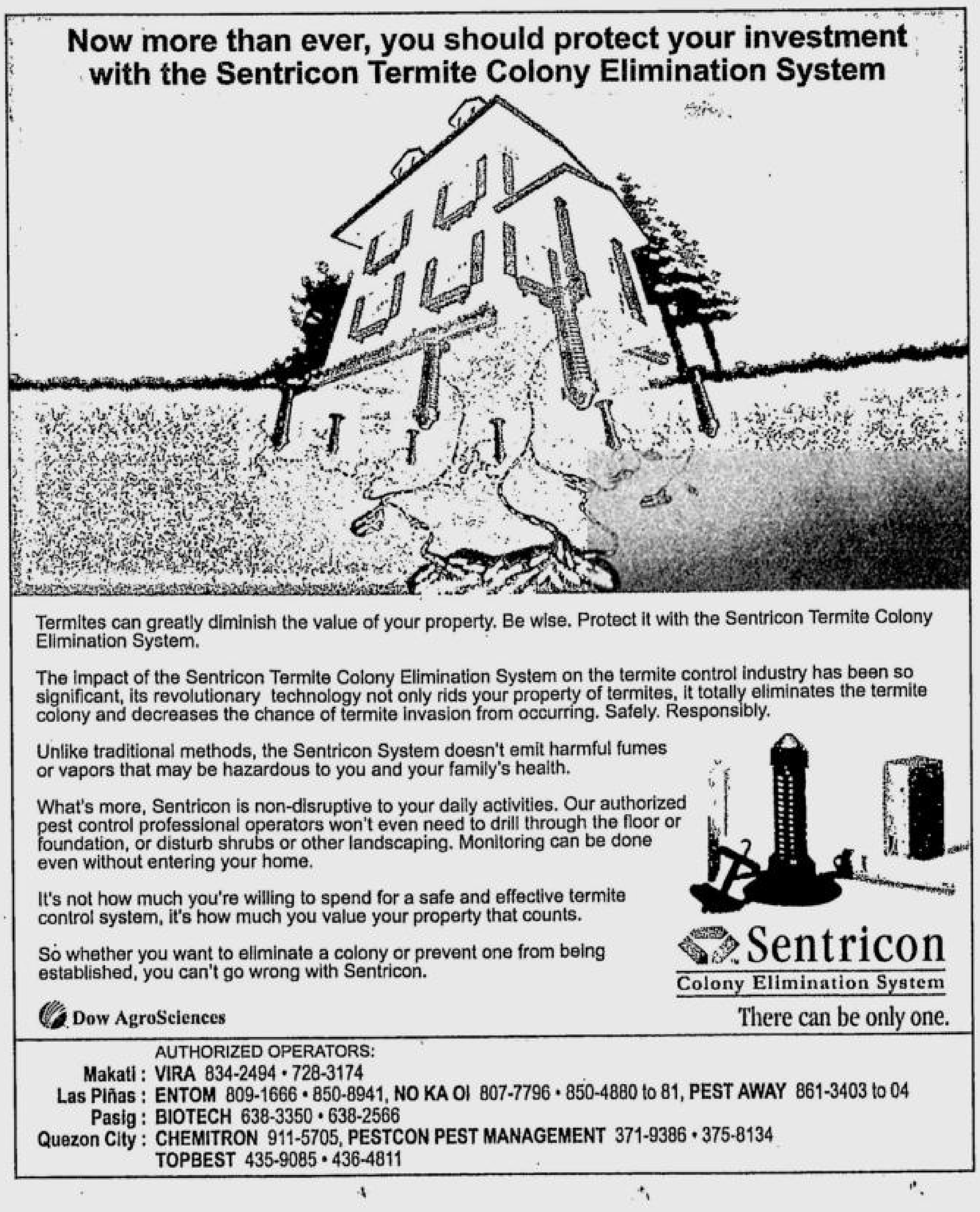
One daring official from Manila, Rolando Sacramento of the Customs Intelligence and Investigation Service (CIIS), found out about Bibit's wrath.

Sacramento had recommended an alert order on a shipment at the Cebu port suspected of containing highly taxable goods. Jake Paguntalan, CIIS director, ignored Sacramento's recommendation, apparently fearing a reprisal from Bibit.

Sacramento insisted on having his way. He got a call from Bibit who reportedly threatened him. "You don't know who you're up against," Bibit reportedly told Sacramento.

Despite the threat, Sacramento went to Deputy Customs Commissioner Celso Templo, described by some insiders as "*halang din ang kaluluwa* (also fearless)."

Templo ordered the shipment opened. Lo and behold! The shipment contained three highly dutiable, luxurious BMW cars.



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Hold order issued vs Roldan, Wang

By Armand N. Nocum

FORMER congressman and actor Dennis Roldan has brought his case to the Supreme Court, with his lawyers citing alleged legal lapses in his arrest and detention in their bid to secure their client's temporary freedom.

The Department of Justice, fearing his prospects of escape, yesterday issued a hold departure order against Roldan, Mitchell Yap Gumabao in real life, and his alleged girlfriend, Suzette Wang. The couple are suspected of orchestrating the kidnapping of a three-year-old Chinese-Filipino boy in Pasig City last Feb. 9.

"They remain a high flight risk," Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez told reporters.

Named respondents in Roldan's petition for the issuance of a temporary restraining order were Secretary Gonzalez, Chief State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuño, Police Chief Edgardo Aglipay, DOJ prosecutors Pablo Formaran III and Irwin Maraya, Police Director Robert Delfin, and Quezon Regional Trial Court Judge Luisa Quijano-Padilla, among others.

In their 58-page petition, the lawyers asked the high court to order the police, "through a writ of mandatory injunction, to release the live body of petitioner" Roldan after posting a bond.

They also asked the Supreme Court to enjoin the Pasig City Regional Trial Court, where the kidnap for ransom case was filed against Roldan last Wednesday, from hearing the matter "until after the preliminary investigation of the incident had been completely concluded."

Roldan's lawyer Philip Sigfrid A. Fortun also asked the high court to declare as "illegal" Roldan's arrest. Police took the actor from his Quezon City house last Feb. 20 without a warrant, and said they did so because he was not caught committing the crime, nor was he anywhere near the place where the victim was detained in Cubao, Quezon City.

In their petition, Roldan's lawyers said Roldan was arrested in his house in Filinvest, Quezon City, five hours after the boy was said to have been "rescued."

"Thus, at the time of his arrest, the crime had already been committed and completed—it was no longer persistent and continuing," the petition said, noting that the Supreme Court "on several occasions, had ruled that the focal point of the propriety of any arrest is the time of its occurrence."

In Roldan's case, he was "sleeping soundly in his and his wife's bedroom when police officers stormed their house and abducted him," the petition added.

Roldan's lawyers also chided Padilla for denying Roldan bail before custodial investigation and preliminary investigation began. They also faulted police for allegedly making Roldan sign a waiver for his arrest and using this to "detain him indefinitely."

The RTC, by affirming this setup, committed "grave abuse of discretion amounting to lack of excess of jurisdiction," the lawyers said, adding that their client's continuing detention caused "emotional and psychological harm not only to himself but to his family as well."

Jeep fare may cost P2 more

By Clarissa S. Batino

A MAJOR transport group yesterday asked the Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board for a P2 increase in minimum fare to cover increases in the costs of fuel, spare parts and basic goods.

If approved, this would raise the minimum fare covering the first four kilometers to P7.50. No request was made for a fare increase for each succeeding distance currently covered by a P1 per additional kilometer traveled.

Efren de Luna, president of Philippine Confederation of Drivers Organization-Alliance of Concerned Transportation Operators (PCDO-Acto) said his group's petition for a fare increase was backed by other major jeepney organizations.

PCDO-Acto claims to have more than 200,000 members nationwide.

De Luna said the group was also coordinating with other organizations for a transport strike after Holy Week.

Zenaida Maranan, president of the Federation of Jeepney Operators and Drivers of the Philippines, said she would have wanted to know the extent of the series of oil prices hikes projected by the industry in the coming weeks before making a move.

"But since PCDO-Acto had already filed the petition, we have to support it," she stressed. "We may just have to follow it up if the fare increase is not enough," Maranan said, adding that her group was not keen on holding a transport holiday. "But if the price of fuel keeps rising, we may see the minimum fare go up to P8 or P9," she said.

Safe meat a must on their agenda

By Jocelyn R. Uy

NO PLACE for contaminated meat in this city.

A local Meat Inspection Board is about to be set up by the Muntinlupa City government to regulate the sale of safe meat in the city as a preventive measure against the spread of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in its growing livestock industry.

FMD is a viral disease that affects cloven-hoofed animals.

Although the disease is not lethal to human beings, people who eat meat contaminated with the disease could experience dizziness and loose bowel movement, doctors said.

The board is expected to screen meat and other related products entering the city and later sold to consumers. It would also conduct field inspection trips and ask slaughterhouses to submit periodic and special reports to the National Meat Inspection Service.

"There is a need for the establishment of a board to check the movement, shipment and transport of livestock, FMD-susceptible animals and meat products into and within the city," said Mayor Jaime Fresnedi.

Those found violating the law would be fined P3,000 to P5,000, or face jail terms from six months to one year.

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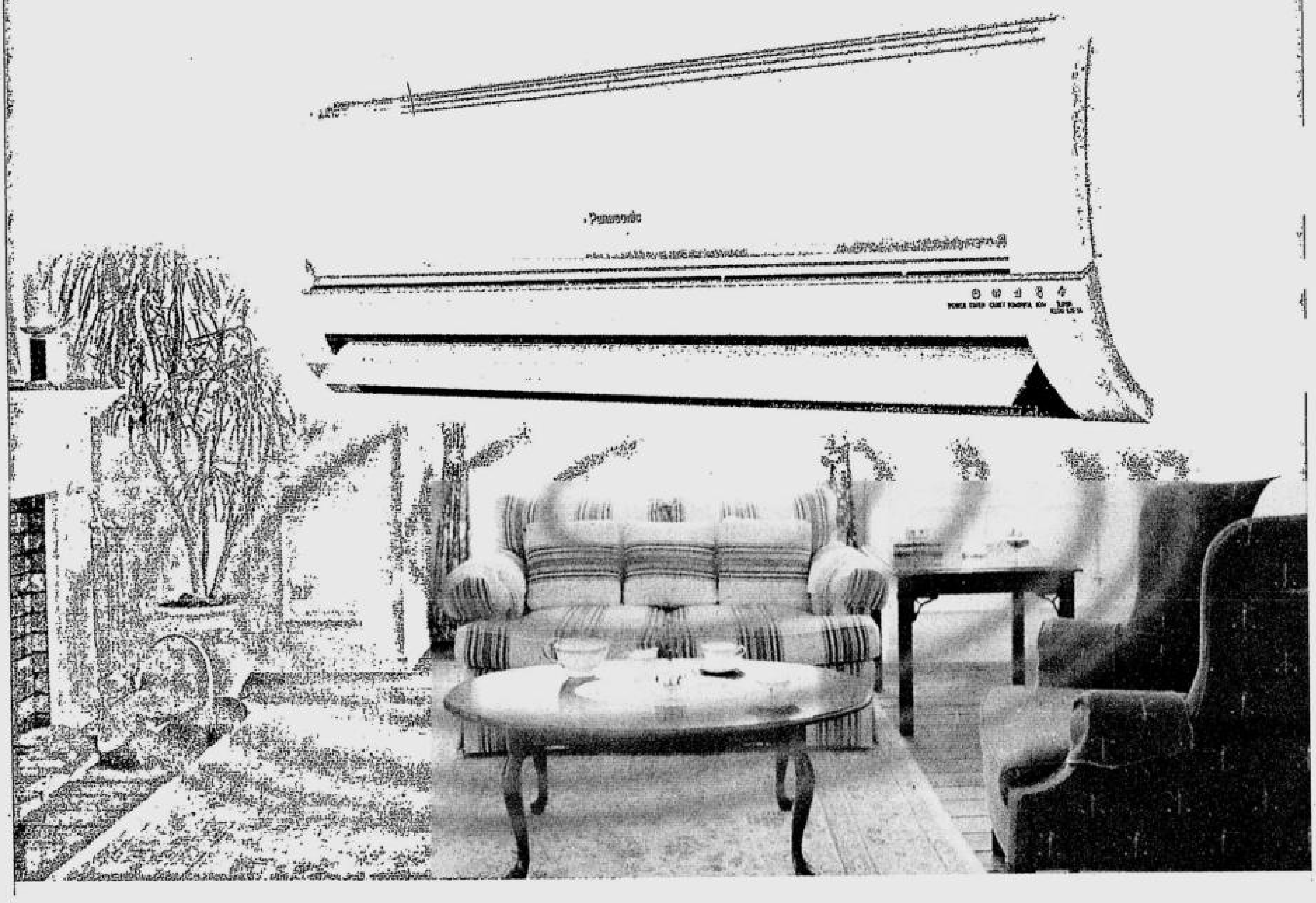

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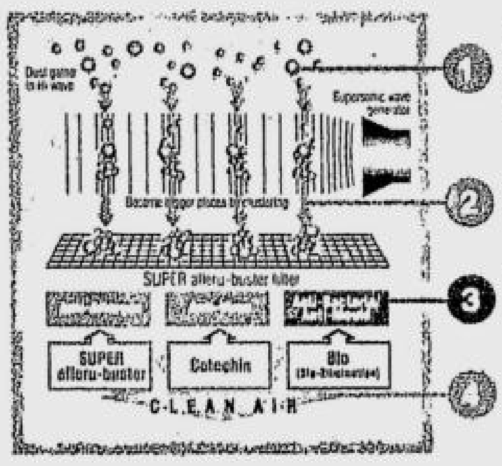

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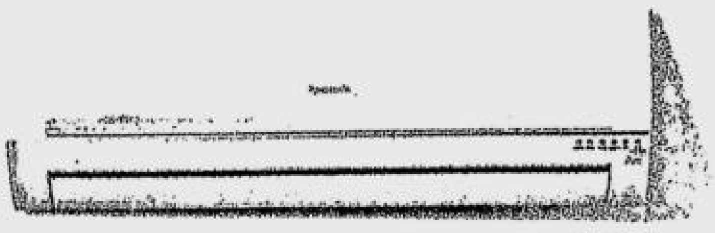

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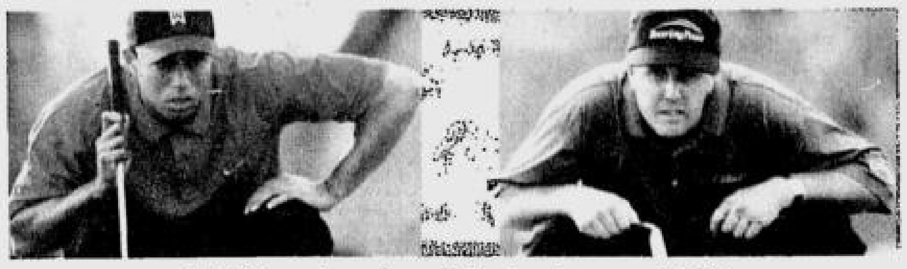
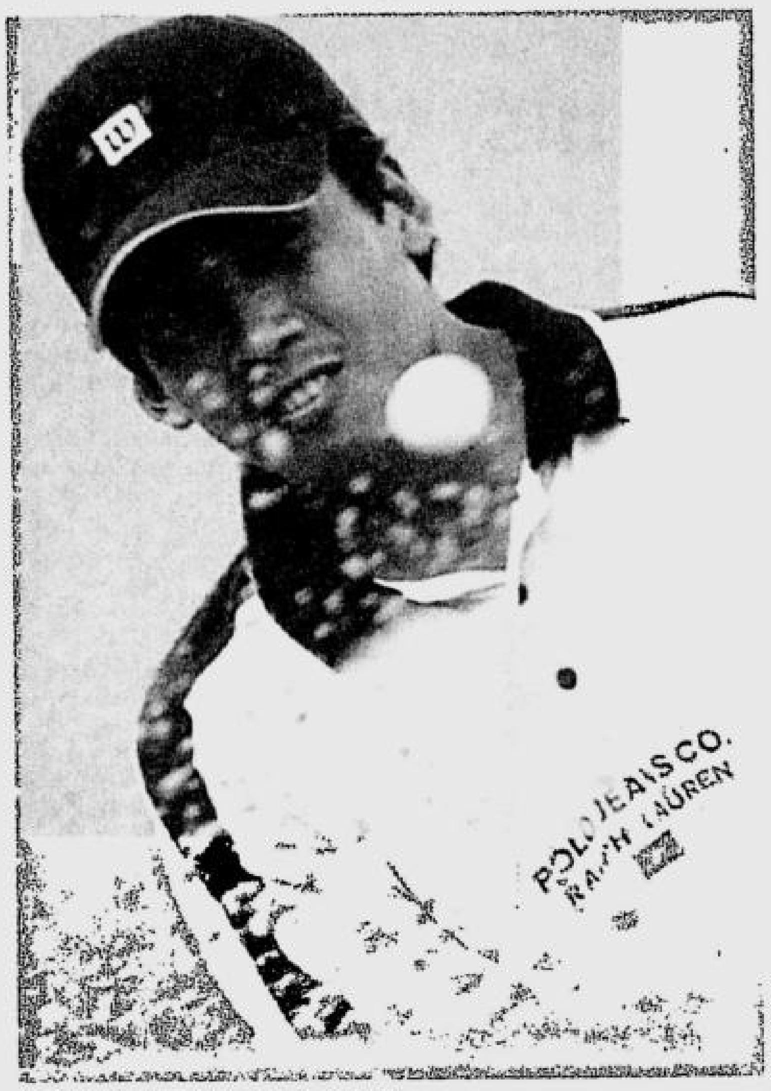
WHAT'S INSIDE

■ Back-up role for Que /A22

■ Valle snares Asian 9-Ball Tour first leg /A23



■ Woods pips Mickelson /A24



PAGUNSAN: I was treated shabbily.

PDI PHOTO

Teed-off Pagunsan bids RP team g'bye

By Musong R. Castillo

CANLUBANG, Laguna—The biggest star will no longer be around to shoot for gold medals in men's golf in the Southeast Asian Games this November.

A tearful Juvic Pagunsan yesterday said he has decided to turn pro after unloading a litany of complaints against officials of the National Golf Association of the Philippines.

"The NGAP doesn't treat its national players like national players," said Pagunsan, who sought out the INQUIRER to make the announcement, in Filipino. "I feel that they (NGAP officials) have been treating me and the other national players shabbily.

"Maybe after doing this, the NGAP will start to do something good for amateur golf."

The 26-year-old top gun of the national team announced his decision to join the play-for-pay ranks—a year ahead of plans—in the company of Canlubang GM Luigi Yulo and Bambi Rivilla, Pagunsan's benefactor for the past five years.

The exclusive interview took place at the Canlubang clubhouse where Pagunsan licked his wounds after planing in from Bacolod, which hosted the recent PAL Interclub.

Among other complaints, Pagunsan zeroed in on the country's stint in the World Amateurs last November in Puerto Rico, where he said they were the only team billeted outside the official hotel, an hour and a half away from the venue.

The reigning Thailand Amateur champion said he and teammates Artemio Murakami, Michael Bibat and Gene Bondoc were made to eat meals bought the night before and their practices were cut short because the vehicle assigned to them were often "commandeered" by wives of "certain people who joined the trip."

"We went to (the World Amateurs) playing for the Philippines, yet we were the only country whose national flag is not on our (golf) bags," Pagunsan said. "These were the same bags used by the ladies' team the week before."

Pagunsan, who won the individual gold medal in the 2001 SEAG in Malaysia, and nearly won the Philippine Open last year at Riviera, said he felt insulted that he was taken out of the national team to the Putra Cup last year. The NGAP had said he wasn't prepared for the event after traveling from New York to Jakarta.

"What preparations are they talking about? I was coming from the US Amateurs where I played against the best in the world. What other kind of practice do I need?" he said.

He admitted he was so fed up with the NGAP that he decided to turn pro after he was penalized for a rule infraction—which he insists he did not commit—during the Interclub, by rules man Jake Ayson, who is also the NGAP executive director.

"*Sa isang taon pa dapat, pero dahil sa nangyari sa Bacolod, sabi ko ayaw ko na*, (I had given myself one more year as an amateur, but after the Bacolod incident, I've decided enough is enough)," he said.

Ayson penalized Pagunsan two strokes supposedly for making a putt while his caddy was in his line of play. It was based on a complaint by Bong Brobio of Southwoods. But their other flightmates later told the INQUIRER they neither saw nor confirmed Pagunsan's supposed violation.

POC installs Joseph new swim president

By Jasmine W. Payo

THE LEADERSHIP crisis in the Philippine Amateur Swimming Association (Pasa) is finally over.

Mark Joseph was installed Pasa president yesterday by the Philippine Olympic Committee arbitration committee, which decided that the former Olympian was elected by a legitimate Pasa board.

Joseph succeeded Monchito Ilagan, the other claimant to the top Pasa post.

POC chair Robert Aventajado, head of the arbitration committee, noted that Ilagan "systematically changed the composition of the Pasa board" to assure his reelection in 2004. Thus, Ilagan was "elected by a board that had no authority to do so."

"The truth has come out," said Joseph. "I'm grateful to the POC for resolving the matter. For us now, we want to move forward not just for the preparation of the SEA Games but also for the Beijing Olympics."

Other officials whose appointments were upheld by the POC were vice presidents Teresita Sy (Luzon), Dale Law (Visayas) and Rodney Barretto (Mindanao), secretary general Akiko Thompson and technical committee chair Ral Rosario.

"(POC president Jose) Peping Cojuangco took a personal hand to end this issue," said Joseph. "We were treated fair and square."

Joseph was elected president by a breakaway group of Pasa directors—who cited their "total lack of confidence" in Ilagan's leadership—last Sept. 11 at the Waterfront Hotel in Cebu City.

Ilagan, who was elected president in 2000, denounced the Pasa coup led by Joseph as illegal since the election was "attended by people who are no longer members of the board."

Aventajado said his committee "did nothing special" in resolving the case.

"We examined their documents, conferred with both parties and determined who was the legal president of Pasa based on their own constitution and by-laws," he said.

"We hope this sets a precedent and shows the other NSAs (National Sports Associations) that they can look to the POC to sift through their disputes impartially," said Aventajado.

The Billiards and Snooker Congress of the Philippines is also waiting for the resolution of the leadership row between its president, Ernesto Fajardo, and secretary general, Joaquin de Tagle.

JOSEPH: Vindicated

Iloilo eleven keeps hopes alive; Negros, NCR ahead

CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY—Iloilo kept its semifinal hopes alive by blasting host Cagayan de Oro-Misamis Oriental, 5-0, yesterday in the 2005 PFF-Adidas National Men's Championship at the Don Gregorio Pelaez Sports Center here.

With the impressive win, the Ilonggos meet Group A co-leader Laguna at 9:30 this morning needing a victory to advance.

Laguna is already assured of a slot in the next stage after nipping Davao, 1-0, for its second win.

Meanwhile, title favorites Negros Occidental-Victorias Sardines and NCR-Philippine Navy, who are both drawn in Group B, showed their might Sunday.

Negros did not frustrate a throng of Ilonggo-speaking fans that trooped to the venue as it bucked a sluggish start to whip Quezon province, 2-0, courtesy of Joshua Fegidero's double whammy in the 28th and 57th minutes.

More impressive was NCR's 3-0 thrashing of Zamboanga, which was beefed up by three Turkish nationals in Er Tahir, Dikmen Furkan and Tamer Baydogan, who was replaced in the second half due to a minor injury.

Striker Jimmy Doña accounted for two goals in the 38th and 86th minutes while Marlon Pinero knocked home a penalty kick in the 50th minute.

Negros and NCR were still battling as of presstime for Group B supremacy with striker Al Borromeo just arriving from Manila to solidify the NCR's frontline.

Iloilo's first goal, delivered by Kinley Delgado in the first-half injury time, dampened the spirits of the Cagayan squad.

Six yellow cards plus a costly red on John Derek Sahirani hastened the hosts' downfall. Iloilo's Paolo Roman Suner (59th minute), Delgado (62nd), Kent Gobuyan (87th) and Clint Gobuyan (90th) accounted for the other goals that eliminated the hosts from this year's title race.

GAMES TODAY
(*Pelaez Sports Center*)
7:30 a.m.—CMOFA vs Davao
9:30 a.m.—Laguna vs Iloilo
2 p.m.—Quezon vs NCR
4 p.m.—Negros vs Zamboanga

ASI'S well-known in Tonga.

Team Tonga tossers know Taulava well

By Ronald M. Natulla
Cebu Daily News

CEBU CITY—Here's a refreshing take on the worn-out controversy over Asi Taulava's citizenship—straight from the heart of the picturesque South Pacific islands where the Talk 'N Text center was born.

The assistant manager of Team Tonga that saw action in the 2005 Volleyball World Men's Volleyball Championships here claims to have seen—and played with—the 6-foot-9 Taulava in their island-country several times.

"I've played rugby with Asi, I'm sure about that," said Siona Fonua.

"We have a small country and most people living in Tonga are easily recognized," said Fonua, who admitted that the controversy surrounding Taulava's citizenship has reached their land.

But despite that, there is one thing Fonua will not comment on. That's the tired issue about Taulava's citizenship.

"They say his mother is Filipino, but I can't attest to that," said Fonua, adding with a facetious smile on her face: "When I get back home, I will research his citizenship."

Tonga is located in Oceania, an archipelago in the South Pacific Ocean with a population of a little over 100,000.

"Asi is well recognized in Tonga because he is one of our best talents in basketball."

Despite Tonga's modest economy, most of its citizens are well into sports. In fact, the Tongan government encourages its people to pursue their talents.

And Taulava?

"Asi is my little big brother," Fonua quipped.

Pacquiao-Morales tiff gets fine set of officials

By Salven Lagumbay,
Contributor

CORTEZ

ONE of the world's best referees and three of the finest judges in boxing have been appointed to officiate the mega-rumble between Ring Magazine featherweight king Manny Pacquiao and Mexican great Erik "El Terible" Morales on March 19 at the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas.

Joe Cortez, the New York-born Puerto Rican known for his "Fair but Firm" moniker, has been tasked by the Nevada State Athletic Commission as the third man on the ring when Pacquiao battles Morales.

A veteran of more than 160 world title fights, Cortez will be working on his third Pacquiao bout.

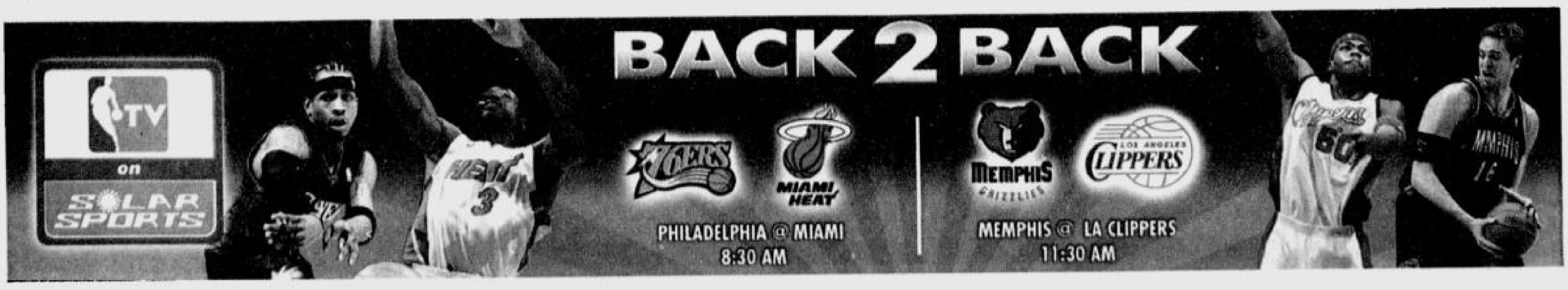
The three judges appointed for the bout are Dave Moretti, Chuck Giampa and Paul Smith, reportedly the same set of judges who called the first Winky Wright-Shane Mosley unification bout, among other high-profile matches.

Pacquiao was actually robbed of a win over WBA-IBF featherweight champion Juan Manuel Marquez in their title clash last year when a fight judge came up with a wrong score that eventually paved the way for a majority draw decision.

According to US-based writer Winchell Campos, Pacquiao's manager, Shelly Finkel, has already given high marks to Cortez and the three judges.

Meanwhile, Pacquiao has started tapering off in his training after racking up 137 rounds of sparring, including his last 12-round sparring session last Saturday.

The Filipino icon had reportedly stopped sparmate Ronie Cabili, a lightweight with Filipino roots, right in the opening round.



70 rookies join PBL Unity draft

THE PHILIPPINE Basketball League will hold its Rookie Draft today for the 2005 Unity Cup at the Makati Coliseum.

Seventy players have made themselves available for the draft, each one hoping to fulfill his dream of playing in the country's premier amateur league.

Five foreign-born Filipinos have also signified their intention to play in the tournament slated April 2.

The draft is set at 2 p.m.

Meantime, Magnolia Dairy Ice Cream has announced that Ramsey Williams will be its direct-hire foreign-born Filipino reinforcement for the Unity Cup.

The Wizards are hoping to retain the crown they won last year over Welcoat Paints.

The league, now on its 23rd season, will broadcast its games live over Studio 23.

Backup role for Que

ANGELO QUE is captain's choice as alternate for the Asian team versus Japan in the Dynasty Cup. PDI PHOTO

KUALA LUMPUR—Filipino Angelo Que has been picked as reserve for the Asian Tour team that will battle Japan in the Visa Dynasty Cup next month.

With earnings of US$36,308.02, Que is now in 12th spot in the Asian Order of Merit.

He will be Asia's first substitute in the event of an injury to any of the 12-member team assembled last week.

The veteran. Kyi Hla Han of Myanmar, meanwhile, was named the team's assistant skipper. The region's top player in 1999, Han was instrumental in Asia's 9-point victory over Japan two years ago.

Hsieh Min-nan was named non-playing captain in the Ryder Cup-style event slated at the Mission Hills Golf Club in Shenzhen, China from April 15-17.

Que ruled the Carlsberg Masters Vietnam tournament late last year over a crack field that included Thai star Thongchai Jaidee, who finished two shots back for second place.

"Teams are allowed to replace a player in the event of injuries before 6 p.m. on the Tuesday of the event week," Hsieh said. "Angelo is in good form and he's agreed to be on standby."

Que finished in a tie for 10th place in the Thai Airways International last Sunday.

"I'm glad to earn his (Hsieh's) confidence as it means a lot to me," said Que. "But I want to play my way into the team for the next Visa Dynasty Cup in 2007."

Hsieh named Chinese stars Zhang Lian-wei and Liang Wen-chong, Thailand's Thammanoon Sriroj and Amandeep Johl of India as captain's picks.

PGA Tour campaigner Shigeki Maruyama banners the Japanese squad together with Toshimitsu Izawa and Shingo Katayama. They will be joined by the stars of the Japanese Tour.

The other members of the Asian team are Thaworn Wiratchant (Thailand), Boonchu Ruangkit (Thailand), Charlie Wi (Korea), Jyoti Randhawa (India), Mo Joong-kyung (Korea) Prayad Marksaeng (Thailand) and Mardan Mamat (Singapore).

Lascuña seeks repeat in The Country Club Invt'l

TONY Lascuña will go all out to put away The Country Club Invitational title for the second straight year when the P3.8 million event tees off March 17 at the par-70 The Country Club in Canlubang, Laguna.

"I will try hard to repeat," said the 33-year-old Lascuña in Filipino.

A cool P1.1 million awaits the champion and tipped to crowd Lascuña in the 72-hole event are 40 other top-rated pros who earned their spots here through invitations by patron Enrique K. Razon Jr.

Lascuña beat Angelo Que by two strokes in a classic final round last year. Although Que is currently campaigning in the Asian Tour, organizers are confident that the 26-year-old will make it to the event.

Former Philippine Open champions Gerald Rosales and Robert Pactolerin are also favored, along with veteran campaigners Mars Pucay, Danny Zarate, Rey Pagunsan, Ruben Sasutil, Richard Sinfuego, Ramon Brobio and Carito Villaroman.

Cassius Casas, the winner of the inaugural staging of the event in 2003, is also in fine form, the memories of missing the cut as the defending champion last year now distant.

Young Turks Jherome Delariarte, Cookie La'O and Marlon Dizon are also expected to play well.

Razon put up the event in 2003 to honor the memory of his father, Don Pocholo, an avid golfer.

Others seeing action are Cesar Ababa, Rey Alit, Eddie Bagtas, Ramil Bisera, Rogelio Cabajar, Al Cruz, Dan Cruz, Rodolfo Cuello, Rodrigo Cuello, Edwin Estrera, Benjie Magada, Mario Manubay, Peter Minoza, Ronald Pactolerin, Lito Rempojo, Elmer Salvador, Dimitrio Sanchez and Vic Santia.

The traditional pro-am will be held on March 16 with a revered roster of invited guests from the business sector and other fields expected to see action.

The organizers will also give the country's top amateurs the chance to compete with the pros.

Interrupted mission

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

WHEN one is good, he/she is really good.

Tiger Woods is good and nothing, nobody, can take that away from him.

Not his marriage to a blonde Swede.

Not Vijay Singh.

Only Tiger Woods can take that away from Tiger Woods.

By winning the Ford Championship yesterday in dramatic fashion, Tiger Woods has restored himself as the best in the world. Again.

Before yesterday's victory, he won a tournament just a few weeks back that, for all intents and purposes, was an omen of things to come—returning to the top of the heap in no time.

"I had fun with Phil," said Tiger Woods moments after beating Phil Mickelson yesterday by one shot.

You call that fun, huh?

Grinding pressure is fun?

Teeth-gnashing is fun?

Not talking to Phil for nearly four hours during their round is fun?

I guess Mr. Webster needs to rewrite the dictionary.

Anyways, Tiger Woods' victory yesterday came after a near-sensational, nail-biting finish.

Trailing Phil Mickelson by two strokes at the start of the day, Tiger Woods closed out with a six-under-par 66 to Mickelson's 69 for the spine-tingling, one-shot victory.

The duel was a virtual shootout between two of the best players of the game today.

They swapped birdies in wild abandon.

When Tiger eagled 12, an unfazed Phil retaliated with birdies on 13 and 14 to equalize.

Both came down to earth with bogeys on 16, but Tiger soared to heaven again with a lovely birdie on 17 from about 10 feet to go one up on Phil.

Phil had a chance to forge a playoff, but his downhill, chip shot from the 18th fringe was a bit strong, the ball kissing the cup's right inner rim before it lipped out.

With Tiger two-putting from the right fringe, the one-shot victory had been secured as Woods dislodged the third-finishing Vijay Singh from world No. 1.

Not only that. Tiger's 24-under-par total at Doral Resort Spa in Miami, Florida, was a tournament record.

Isn't that also an omen of things to come?

Remember, before the so-called Tiger Woods "slump," if it can even be called that, Tiger Woods was breaking records left and right.

Yes, he is still about 10 wins away from Jack Nicklaus' mark of 18 majors but, at the rate he is playing this year, Tiger Woods seems bent on resuming his chase of golf records.

The Masters is barely a month away and it was at the Masters where Tiger Woods jumpstarted his career in 1997. With his spectacular victory yesterday in the Ford Championship, don't be surprised if Tiger Woods wins a big chunk of this year's four majors—if not all four of them.

Remember, he has won all four majors already only a while back—when he hasn't married Miss Nordegren yet.

I say now that he has settled down, Tiger Woods, not yet 30 years old, has all the time to stay focused on his interrupted mission: Surpass Jack Nicklaus' record.

To a good golfer, there's no way but to become better with each passing day. And next become the best of the best, if not of all time.

***

FASTBREAK. Congratulations to Frederick W. Siao, the city sports coordinator of Iligan, for helping steer Iligan's golfers to the championship of the Sportswriters Division in the recent 58th PAL Interclub in Bacolod City. Also to PAL president Jimmy Bautista, who showed his genuine concern for the tournament by sacrificing time and effort, rushing to the city of smiles from Manila just hours after arriving from Nagoya on an official mission to join Henry So Uy, the PAL executive vice president, in the awarding ceremonies on Saturday (March 5). Cheers!

SINO ANG BABANGGA SA GINEBRA?
PBA
ABC Iba tayo
2005 PBA FIESTA CONFERENCE
ASTIG!
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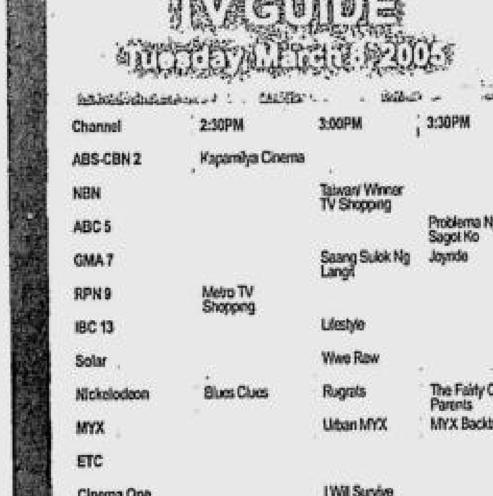
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
TV GUIDE
Tuesday March 8 2005

Channel	2:30PM	3:00PM	3:30PM	4:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM	9:00PM	9:30PM	10:00PM	10:30PM	11:00PM	11:30PM
ABS-CBN 2	Kapamilya Cinema				Showbiz No. 1 (4:25 PM)	Gatekeepers (5:10 PM)	Gundam Seed (5:35 PM)	The Road To Stardom	TV Patrol		Spirits	Krystala	Hiram	Save The Last Dance	Til Death Do Us Part	Bora			Insider
NBN		Taiwan/ Winner TV Shopping		Value Vision	Teledyaryo	Value Vision		MMDA On The Road		Network Forum		Teledyaryo		Family Rosary Crusade		Paco Park Presents		Auto Focus	
ABC 5			Problema Nyo, Sagot Ko	KNN	Anime Ring Kasho		Anime Ring Kasho		Sentro	Lizzie Mcguire	Three Blind Dates		Wow Mali		Big News	The Probe Team Documentaries		Race Hour	Billboard On-Air
GMA 7		Saang Sulok Ng Langit	Joyride	Glass Shoes	One Piece	Knock Out	Slam Dunk	24 Oras		Extra Challenge		Mulawin		Starstruck	Stairway To Heaven	Bahay Mo Ba 'To?			Saksi
RPN 9	Metro TV Shopping			Hey Arnold!	As Told By Ginger	Wild Thornberries	Sponge Bob	Entertainment Tonight	8 Simple Rules	Ripley's Believe It or Not		Crossing Jordan		John Doe		Newswatch Now	20th Street		
IBC 13		Lifestyle		EZ Shop		Home Shopping Network	IBC Express Balita	Pangarap Kong Jackpot		Home Shopping Network		Mosconi Cup					IBC News Tonite	Up Close And Personal	
Solar		Wwe Raw				Mutant League	Heavy Gear	Maxsteel	Dungeons And Dragons	Stargate SG1		Soldier Of Fortune		RHD/LA		The Wire		Oz	
Nickelodeon	Blues Clues	Rugrats	The Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	All That	Are You Afraid of the Dark?	100 Deeds of Eddie McDowd	The Amanda Show	The Adventures Jimmy Neutron	Fairly Odd Parents	SpongeBob SquarePants	As Told By Ginger	Nick Mix						Rugrats
MYX		Urban MYX	MYX Backtrax	Pop MYX	OPM MYX	Take 5	My MYX	MYX Daily Top Ten		Mellow MYX	Rock MYX	Pop MYX	Urban MYX	Top Of The Pops	MYX Remakes	My MYX	MYX Backtrax	OPM MYX	Mellow MYX
ETC				The Today Show		Starting Over		NBC Nightly News		Will & Grace		One Tree Hill		The O.C.		Tonight Show With Jay Leno			
Cinema One		I Will Survive				Drama Studio: Ipaglaban Mo The Movie		Bata, Bata Paano Ka Ginawa				Cine Tonight: Working Girls 2				Antonia Part 3			
Studio 23				PBL Game 2				Ragnarok	Project Arms	Wazzup Wazzup	Angel			Smallville		News Central	Oprah		The Men's Room
AXN		CSI: Miami		CSI: Miami		Fear Factor		Samurai X	Samurai X	Andromeda (Season III)		Ripley's Believe It or Not		Alias		The Contender			The Amazing Race 7
Star World	Frasier	The Bold & The Beautiful		American Idol		Ally McBeal		The Simpsons	The Drew Carey Show	Star News Asia	Friends	American Idol		Wild Card		Miss Match		Friends	American Idol
CNN				Business International		Larry King Live		World News	World Sport	Business International		World News Asia		World News		World News Asia		World News	World Sport
National Geographic		Air Crash Investigation		Seconds From Disaster		Interpol Investigates		The Snake Wranglers	Croc Chronicles Dr. Brady Barr	Wild	Wildlife Detectives	About Asia		Nat'l Geographic Specials		Air Crash Investigation		Seconds From Disaster	
Solar Sports		Copenhagen Masters MxdD Final		RP-Taiwan 9 Ball Chall: Valle vs. Fu				GWS ep 7-2005	ATP Dubai Tennis C'ship '05 Quart' Final				NBA TV Daily	NBA Game Memphis @ Clippers					NBA Inside Stuff
Lifestyle Network	Secret Gardens	The Fid	Mission Organization	Carol Duvall	Molto Mario	Hot Off The Grill	Good Eats	Extreme Cuisine	Unwrapped	Passion For Dessert							Back To Basics		
HBO			The Wild Thornberry's Movie (3:45PM)				Doctor Detroit (5:20 PM)			The Brady Bunch In The White House			Kangaroo Jack			Six Feet Under 36 Everyone Leaves		The Quick And The Dead (10:50PM)	
Star Movies				Mixed Nuts			Rattled (5:45 PM)				Try 17 (7:25 PM)			Sweet Home Alabama				When a Man Loves A Woman (10:50PM)	
Cartoon Network	Scooby-Doo Show	The All New Popeye Show		Tom & Jerry Show	The Woody Woodpecker Show	Sylvester & Tweety Mysteries	Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles	X-Men Evolution	Static Shock	Yu-Gi-Oh!	Shaman King	The Looney Tunes Show		The Powerpuff Girls	Dexter's Laboratory	Mr. T	Josie And The Pussycats	The Superfriends	Yu-Gi-Oh!
ESPN		Eng Premier League Highlights 04/05		Big 12 Conf: Oklahoma vs Texas				Big 12 Conf.: Texas vs Oklahoma St.				Sportscenter Asia	2004 Skins Billiards C'ship NJ USA		Big 12 Conf.: Oklahoma vs Texas Tech				Sportscenter Asia
Disney Channel	Mr Bean The Animated Series	Totally Spies	The Sleepover Club	Art Attack/Untalkative Bunny	That's So Raven	Martin Mystery	Totally Spies	Kim Possible	Mr Bean The Animated Series	Lilo & Stitch/Untalkative Bunny	Tuck Everlasting			My Wife And Kids	That's So Raven	America's Funniest Home Video	According To Jim	20,000 Leagues Under The Sea	
Cinemax			Thoroughly Modern Millie				Donor Unknown (5:45 PM)				48 Hrs			The Skulls II			Above Suspicion		
Hallmark Channel	Mad About You	Grace's Choice				Play With Me Sesame	Sesame Street		Bewitched	Judging Amy		Just Cause		Longshot			Hustle (10:35PM)		Judging Amy (11:25PM)
Discovery Channel		Civilisations				Wild Science		Ultimate Discovery Showcase		Rides		Human Discovery		Wild Discovery		Ultimate Discovery		Science Mysteries	
MTV Philippines			Hangin Out at MTV		MTV Most Wanted		TRL		Ask Bridge	MTV Diyes		Carmen & Dave	Room Raiders	High School Stories	I Want A Famous Face	Harana	Whatever Things	VH1 Video Collections	
Sports Plus				Pac10 Wildcard (1st Pick) Nat'l					Porsche rnd 9&10	Arena Football: Sn Jose @ Orlando						Asian Motocross '03 Review			Bikini Destination
EWTN	Pope John Paul's Legacy To The Family	Angelus (3:15 PM)	Mysteries Of The Rosary	My Little Angels	Angel Force	The Holy Rosary With Mother Angelica and the Nuns Of Our Lady Of Angels Monastery	Fr. Groeschel	Catholic Morality & The Catechism	EWTN Gallery	The Journey Home		Does The Church Still Teach That	Lord, Have Mercy	Daily Mass		Angelus (10:15PM)	We Are One Body	Web Of Faith	

TV SCHEDULES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE.



Sagad ba ang paghahanda ni Manny Pacquiao?
MILLION DOLLAR MANNY
Exclusive footage from Los Angeles!
Abangan! March 17, 10:30 n.g.
Dito lang sa ABC
INQ TV

Valle snares Asian 9-Ball Tour first leg

By June Navarro

SINGAPORE—Before hitting the final shot, Gandy Valle thought about his family. Then the ninth ball unerringly made its way to the corner pocket.

Valle turned back 16-year-old sensation Wu Chia-ching of Chinese Taipei, 11-9, Sunday night to rule the first leg of the 2005 San Miguel Asian 9-Ball Tour at the Suntec Exhibition Hall here.

A Tour first-timer, Valle overcame a 4-6 deficit to claim seven of the last nine racks and the US$10,000 (P540,000) champion's purse.

But behind all the accurate shotmaking and precise calculations, Valle's two-year-old son, Ralph Lauren, and his wife, Roselle, were on the back of his mind.

"This is for my family," said the 31-year-old Valle shortly after ramming home the wide-open ninth ball in the 20th frame to the delight of a predominantly Filipino crowd.

"I thought about them (Ralph Lauren and Roselle) before making that shot," he added, explaining that his earnings will go straight to the family savings.

Wu, who settled for the runner-up prize of $5,000, succumbed to the grinding pressure in the end, blowing his break on the 17th to give the Davao City cue master a chance to seize the upper hand.

"When I saw the opportunity, I made sure not to waste any of my shots especially in the last three sets," said Valle, who won a gold medal in the 9-ball doubles in the 1998 Asian Games.

Valle, who qualified here by reaching the semifinals of the recent Hope P1-million All-Filipino Billiards Open, acknowledged the great potential of Wu, a quarterfinal finisher in Manila last year but a title contender this season.

"He's (Wu) very young but talented, said Valle. "He's going to give Tour players more headaches in the future."

Valle reached the finals after booting out Taiwanese Yang Ching-shun, 11-8, in the semifinals and eliminating compatriot Lee Vann Corteza, 12-10, in the quarterfinals of the tour organized by ESPN-StarSports.

Wu advanced to the title showdown by booting out Filipino Antonio Gabica.

The Tour's next stops will be Jakarta, Kaohsiung and Manila after which the top 10 players on the Tour Order of Merit qualify for this year's World 9-Ball Championships in Chinese-Taipei.

STAR SPORTS
San Miguel
BEER

GANDY Valle celebrates with his fans after unerringly making his last shot.

DHL-NGAP tourney gets going today

THE MAIN protagonists in the recent PAL Interclub championship tangle again anew when the 10th DHL-WWWExpress National Amateur Golf Championship fires off today at Cangolf's challenging north course.

Canlubang mainstays set out as favorites in the tournament as they try to redeem themselves from their heartbreaking loss to the Southwoods squad in Bacolod.

Reigning champion Jun Bernis and top amateur Juvic Pagunsan are expected to lead the hosts' bid in the four-day event, which also serves as part of the selection process for the RP team competing in this year's Southeast Asian Games.

Former national amateur champ Artemio Murakami and Michael Bibat, heroes in Southwoods' thrilling 2-point win over Canlubang, will spearhead the Carmona, Cavite-based golfers' campaign in the annual event sponsored by DHL World Express and WWWExpress and organized and conducted by the National Golf Association of the Philippines.

Others vying for top honors are former champ Abe Rosal, Boyet Saragoza, Jay Bayron, Erwin Vinluan, Marvin Dumandan, Hanson So Jr. and Tonlits Asistio.

The 31-year-old Bernis rode on a steady final round stint to thwart a rampaging Juvic Pagunsan and win the crown last year. He went on to top the national amateur championship at Villamor and then won the Samsung Amateur Tour in Baguio to emerge as the winningest player in the ranks last year.

Meanwhile, hostilities in the ladies division begin tomorrow with Jayvie Agojo heavily fancied to retain the title she won last year. Out to foil her bid are Lora Roberto, Carmelette Villaroman, Anya Tanpinco and Lina de Guzman.

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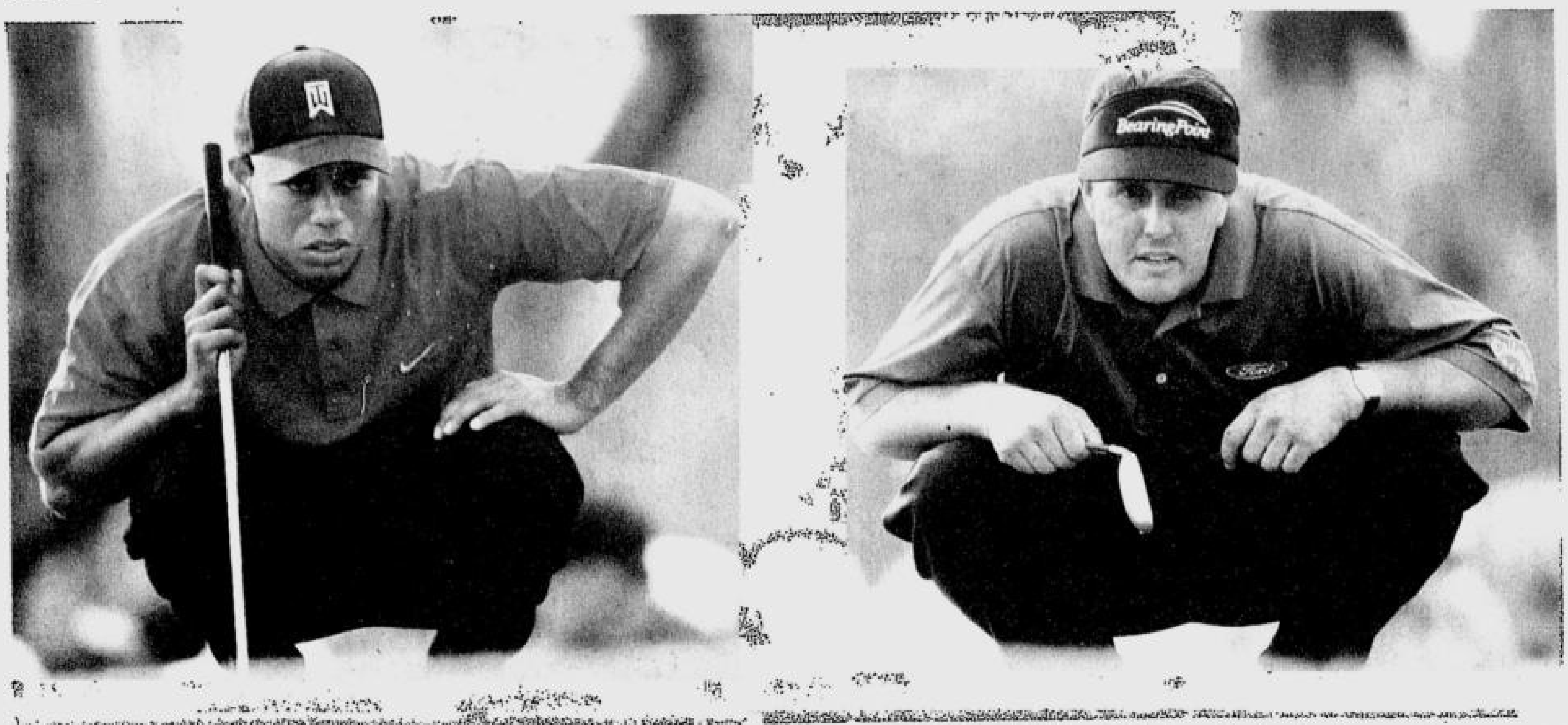
Sa BYLINE INQUIRER — PAGUDPOD FOR 4, FOR LESS THAN P6,000!

Ating kabalitaan Cheri Mercado
Tuwing Huwebes, 10:30 ng gabi,
pagkatapos ng American Idol! Dito lang sa ABC
HOPE Globe HANDYPHONE

Sapat ba ang paghahanda ni Manny Pacquiao?
MILLION DOLLAR MANNY
Exclusive footage from Los Angeles!
Abangan! March 17, 10:30 ng g
Dito lang sa ABC
INQ TV



DUEL AT DORAL: Tiger Woods (left) and Phil Mickelson study their putts on the 14th green which Mickelson birdied to tie the dramatic shoot-out. AFP

WORLD NO. 1 AGAIN

Woods pips Mickelson

MIAMI, Florida—Tiger Woods shot a six-under 66 overcoming a two-stroke deficit on Sunday to capture the $5.5 million PGA Miami tournament and reclaim the world No. 1 ranking.

Reigning Masters champion Phil Mickelson began the final round with a two-shot lead, but despite a steady three-under 69 he could not move clear of the charging Woods at the Doral Resort's Blue Monster course.

Mickelson was clinging to a one-shot lead over Woods halfway through the final round when Woods eagled No. 12 and then broke their deadlock with a birdie on No 17.

"What a day," Woods said after posting a tournament-record low score of 24-under 264. "We both played well. It's not like we slopped it around.

"I can't speak for Phil, but I was certainly nervous out there. If you're not nervous on a day like this, you're not alive."

This marked the first time the two have played together in the final group since the 2003 Buick Invitational, where Woods once again outduelled Mickelson.

Mickelson had been ahead all week, but Woods roared into second place Saturday with a sizzling 63.

There were 11 of the top 12 players in the world on hand in Miami but in the end it came down to a two-man race.

The drama lasted right to the end, with Mickelson lipping out his birdie chip at the par-four 18th, before Woods sank his winning par putt in front of a sellout crowd of 35,000.

Vijay Singh tied for third with Zach Johnson at 269, the Fijian-Indian surrendering his world No. 1 ranking to Woods.

Woods spent a record 334 weeks atop the rankings, including 264 in a row before being dethroned last September by Singh's victory at Boston. Singh went on to win nine events last year and set a US PGA tour prize money record.

On Sunday, Woods took the lead for the first time with an eagle at the long par-five 12th to go two shots ahead, but Mickelson birdied the next two to tie it up.

Both bogeyed the 16th, before Woods went ahead for the final time with a 28-foot bomb at the 17th.

"I'm a little ticked for not getting it done," said Mickelson. "This is a great slap in the face. I thought I was playing better than anybody and I knew I was going to win today."

Even at his best Mickelson couldn't beat a red-hot Woods, who seems near the form he displayed when he was dominating the game four or so years ago.

"I thought I could place the ball on the correct side of the fairways most of the week," Woods said.

Woods took 10 holes to catch Mickelson, and went ahead with a mighty 27-foot eagle at the par-five 12th, where he got home with a 300-yard three-wood, which he claimed he hit a little thin.

"I thought for sure it was in the bunker but it was nice to get a break like that."

Woods was thrilled and so was Mickelson, if he is to be believed.

"I loved it, because I want to compete against him at his best. I didn't want him to be giving it to me," Mickelson said. "I wanted to go after it, and I loved that I backed it up on 13 and 14 with two birdies." *AFP*

Annika rallies to win in Mexico

HUIXQUILUCAN, Mexico—Annika Sorenstam rallied to win her first LPGA tour event of the year, shooting a 4-under 68 in windy conditions Sunday for a three-stroke victory in the inaugural MasterCard Classic.

SORENSTAM rises to the occasion anew AP

Sorenstam had eight birdies —five in a row on Nos. 2-6 —to offset four bogeys on the high-altitude Bosque Real Country Club course.

The Swede, also playing for the first time since filing for divorce from David Esch, won her 57th LPGA tour title, finishing at 7-under 209. Last year, she won eight tour events and two international titles.

"I'm looking forward to the rest of the season," Sorenstam said. "I wanted everybody to know that I'm ready to play and ready to go."

Karrie Webb, the ANZ Ladies Masters winner last week in Australia, had a 70 to finish second. Second-round leader Cristie Kerr shot a 75 to match South Korea's Han Hee-won (71) at 3 under, and Mexican Lorena Ochoa (68) rallied to finish fifth at 2 under. Rookie Paula Creamer (68) and Michelle Redman (72) were 1 under.

The tournament was the first LPGA tour event in Mexico since 1975.

The wind kicked up to 33 kph (20 mph) in the afternoon, complicating long approaches at the course, on a hill overlooking the 2,255-meter (7,400-foot) high Mexican capital.

"The wind was gusting tremendously," Sorenstam said. *AP*

Last-hole eagle gives Els Dubai victory

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates—Ernie Els eagled the final hole Sunday to win the Dubai Desert Classic by one stroke over Miguel Angel Jimenez.

Els, who shot a 68 and finished with a 19-under 269 at the 7,264-yard Majlis Course of Emirates Golf Club, had been trailing Jimenez and Stephen Dodd by one shot on the final tee. But the South African reached the 547-yard 18th green in two and then sank an 18-foot eagle putt.

Jimenez also reached the green in two, but left his first putt 10 feet short and missed his birdie attempt to finish the round with a 70. The five-time winner on the European Tour last year finished in a tie for second with Dodd at 270.

"The putt on the 18th was just about perfect," Els said. "I feel sad for Miguel. He's a perfect gentleman."

Colin Montgomerie of Scotland carded a bogey-free round of 69 to finish fourth at 16-under. Gregory Havret was fifth, followed by Nick Dougherty, Lee Westwood and Robert Karlsson. *AP*

Irrepressible Kenyans dominate LA Marathon

LOS ANGELES—Mark Saina beat fellow Kenyan Ben Maiyo to win the Los Angeles Marathon on Sunday.

Saina earned a $75,000 bonus for his winning time of 2 hours, 9:35 minutes as part of the battle-of-the-sexes format that allows the women to start ahead of the men.

Saina and Russian Lyubov Denisova, who set a course record for the women, both received $25,000 and a new car for winning the men's and women's divisions.

Denisova won in 2:26:10. *AP*

FRANCE'S Sebastien Grosjean hits a backhand against Sweden's Joachim Johansson. AFP

US, Swede Cuppers fall

LONDON—Nine-time champion France eliminated Sweden from the Davis Cup on Sunday, advancing to the quarterfinals when Paul-Henri Mathieu defeated former Australian Open winner Thomas Johansson 6-1, 6-4, 6-7 (4), 6-4.

The 3-2 victory was the fifth for France in their 12 meetings with Sweden, and the first since the French won the 1996 final, 3-2, in their last clash.

Russia also advanced to the quarterfinals, beating Chile 4-1, while the Netherlands finished off a 3-2 victory over Switzerland, and Romania completed a 3-2 win over Belarus.

Croatia took an insurmountable 3-1 lead over the United States after Ivan Ljubicic outlasted Andy Roddick in a taut five-set marathon. The remaining reverse singles match became essentially an exhibition with doubles specialist Bob Bryan, who subbed for Andre Agassi, defeating Roko Karanusic, a replacement for Mario Ancic, to make the final result 3-2.

Australia and Argentina both capped off 5-0 sweeps, the Australians vanquishing Austria, and Argentina beating the Czech Republic.

Slovakia, which eliminated defending champion Spain on Saturday, finished off a 4-1 victory. Fernando Verdasco earned Spain's lone consolation win.

With their victories, France will meet Russia in a rematch of the 2002 final and Slovakia will face the Dutch in the quarterfinals July 15-17. In the other quarterfinals, it will be Australia vs. Argentina, and Romania will go up against Croatia. *AP*

Post-Webber Kings blast Pistons at home

SACRAMENTO, California—Mike Bibby had 19 points and 11 assists,. Kenny Thom added 19 points, and Sacramento beat the Detroit Pistons 100-85 Sunday in the Kings' first home game since Chris Webber's departure.

Peja Stojakovic and Darius Songaila scored 14 points apiece in an impressive homecoming victory for the Kings' revamped roster.

Sacramento embarked on a six-game road trip the day Webber was traded to Philadelphia nearly two weeks ago along with two reserves for Thomas, Corliss Williamson and Brian Skinner.

Rasheed Wallace had 19 points and 10 rebounds for the Pistons, who finished a six-game road trip with consecutive losses to Phoenix, Seattle and Sacramento. The defending NBA champions missed 13 of 24 free throws.

Rockets 90, Mavericks 69

In Houston, Tracy McGrady had 32 points and 10 rebounds for the Rockets. McGrady scored 27 of his points after getting six stitches on his chin following a collision in the first quarter.

The Mavericks, playing without the injured Dirk Nowitzki and Michael Finley, set a season-low for total points. *AP*

SACRAMENTO'S Mike Bibby (right) drives past Detroit's Antonio McDyess. AP

Other results: Timberwolves 99, Celtics 97; Knicks 115, Warriors 99; Heat 102, Cavaliers 82; Spurs 101, Jazz 94; Raptors 95, Hornets 84.

NCA qualifying round today at Big Dome

THE QUALIFYING round of the National Cockers Association (NCA) 7-cock derby kicks off today at the Araneta Coliseum with 58 matches lined-up beginning at 7 p.m. Co-hosts of the event are NCA president Ito Yñares, Jet Fernando of Pampanga, MTJ Brothers and Albert Dichavez. The 4-cock championship round is on Thursday, March 10. Last week, Rene Medina's Lucky Rin II Firefly Binangonan entry topped the NCA derby hosted by Bebot Uy, Boy Jiao and Firefly Group. The next NCA derbies will be on April 5 and 7 and on April 12 and 14. For inquiries, call 911-2928 and 911-3101.

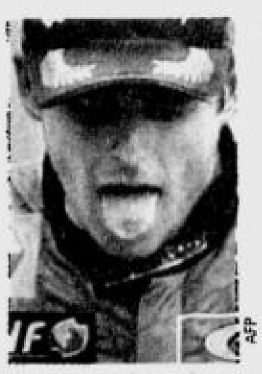
8 share P1.6-M cash pot in Roligon derby

EIGHT entries from a record-breaking field of 329 emerged as co-champions and shared the P1.6 million cash pot in Roligon Mega Cockpit's Largahan 5-Cock Derby last week. Mike Buendia of Batangas, the 2002 LGBA Breeder of the Year, went home with the Toyota 4x4 Surf after his entry Buenas Dias posted the fastest winning time of 10.6 seconds in the championship fight. Buendia beat another champion, MR Andaya of Bicol, whose entry St. Michael 2 earlier posted 11 seconds. The other winners were Boni (Shintaro), Erwin Diamante (BBJ), Art de Castro (Hardy I), Charlie Espiritu (Carly and Aidan), Esting Teopaco and Capt. Ben Rodriguez (Stinger CBR) and Gerry Garovillas (Solar Star Special).

Submission of entries for MF 6-cocker up

PARTICIPANTS seeing action in the Miko Fatman 6-Cock Derby must submit their official entries today at the Pasay City Cockpit from 2 p.m. to 9 p.m. The second-round eliminations will start at 6 p.m. tomorrow, according to derby host Pepito Ngo, who put up a guaranteed prize of P1.2 million. Entry fee is P18,700. The opening round was held yesterday featuring 72 entries. Sponsors of the event are Sagupaan Complexor 3000, Sagupaan Mite Free and Sagupaan B-50 Forten. For inquiries, call 843-1890, 843-1746 and 816-6750.

Victorious Fisichella ends Schu's rule



FISICHELLA laps it up. AFP

MELBOURNE, Australia—Giancarlo Fisichella had to wait five days between winning his first Grand Prix title and having it confirmed. And that was after he had 100 starts in Formula One.

So his celebrations when he drove his Renault to first place from pole position in Sunday's Australian Grand Prix were understandably exuberant.

Fisichella won his second Grand Prix title in 142 starts and ended Michael Schumacher's domination at Melbourne's Albert Park, the seven-time world champion failing to get his Ferrari across the line.

The minor places on the podium didn't change from 2004, with Schumacher's teammate Rubens Barrichello in second place and Fisichella's Renault teammate Fernando Alonso third.

"It's been fantastic, a great experience," said the 32-year-old Italian.

Red Bull Racing, formerly Jaguar, won five points from David Coulthard's fourth place and another two when Christian Klien was seventh.

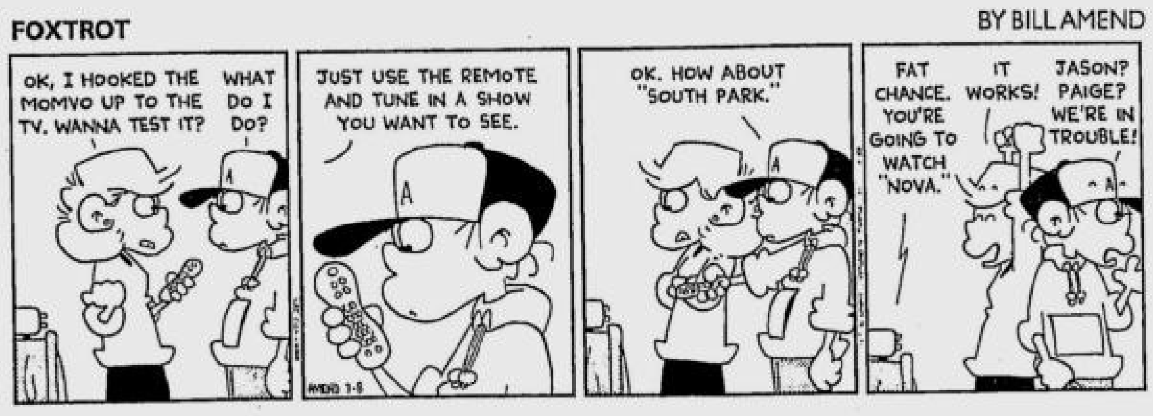
McLaren had to settle for the middle of the starting grid and points from Juan Pablo Montoya's sixth place and Kimi Raikkonen's eighth. *AP*

STRONG BACKING: The sport of triathlon in the country got a boost recently with the entry of Stronghold Insurance as a corporate backer for the activities of the Triathlon Association of the Philippines (TRAP). Stronghold will provide personal accident insurance coverage for triathletes and the RP team. TRAP president Tom Carrasco Jr. (seated left) seals the deal with Stronghold EVP-GM Jun de los Reyes as TRAP's media head Lito Cinco and Stronghold's Biboy Rabanes look on.

STRONGHOLD
INSURANCE
MOTOR CAR
MAR
FIRE
CONTRACTORS
SURETY
ACCIDENT
ATHLON ASSOCIATION

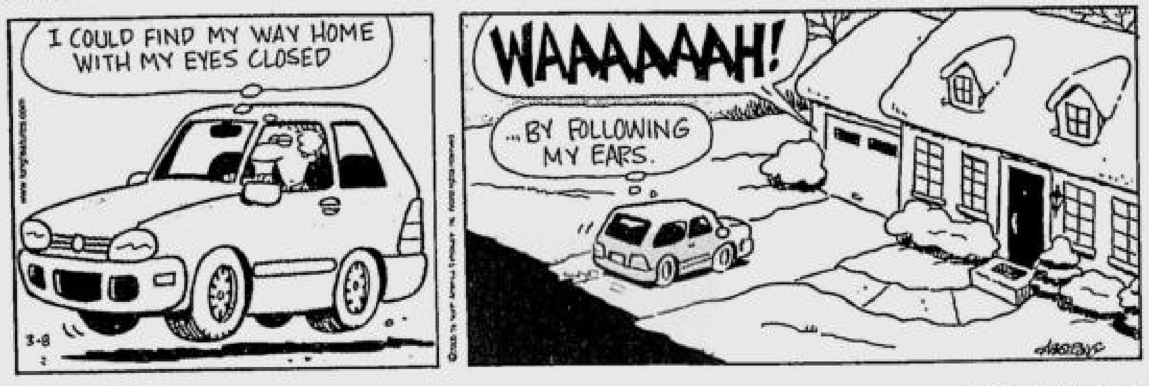
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


OK, I HOOKED THE MOMVO UP TO THE TV. WANNA TEST IT?
WHAT DO I DO?
JUST USE THE REMOTE AND TUNE IN A SHOW YOU WANT TO SEE.
OK. HOW ABOUT "SOUTH PARK."
FAT CHANCE. YOU'RE GOING TO WATCH "NOVA."
IT WORKS!
JASON? PAIGE? WE'RE IN TROUBLE!

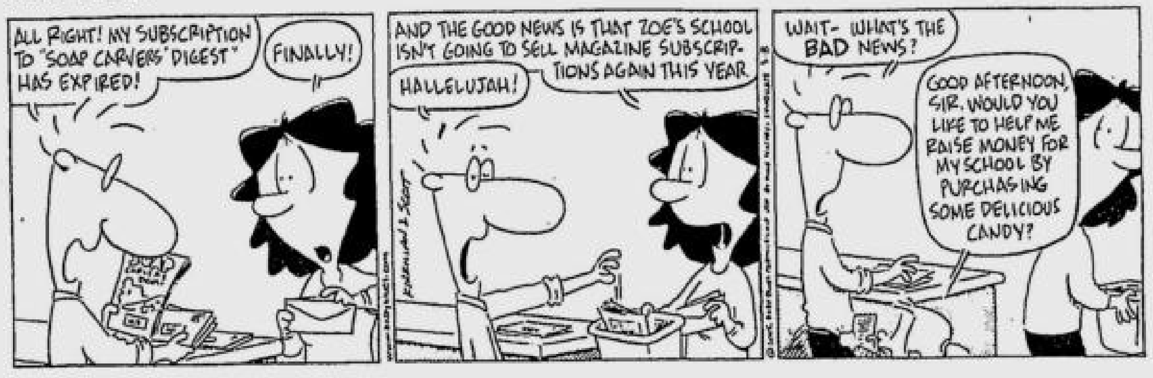
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


I COULD FIND MY WAY HOME WITH MY EYES CLOSED
WAAAAAAH!
...BY FOLLOWING MY EARS.
3-8

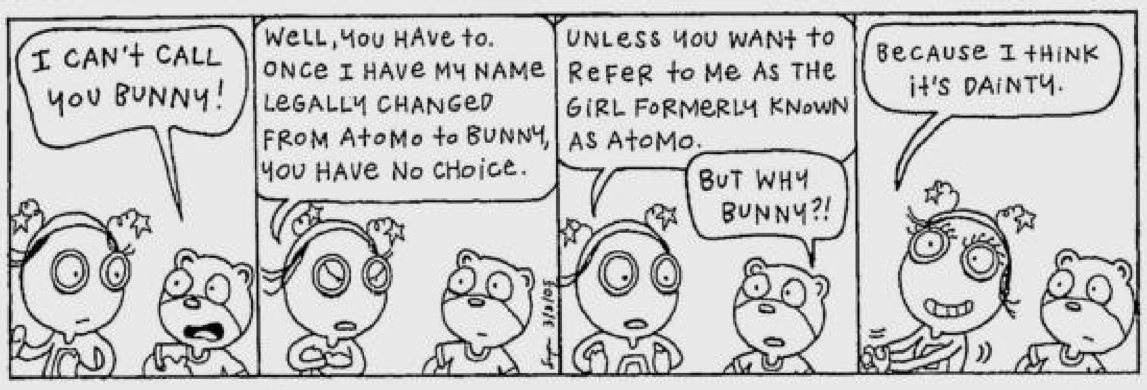
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


ALL RIGHT! MY SUBSCRIPTION TO "SOAP CARVERS' DIGEST" HAS EXPIRED!
FINALLY!
AND THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT ZOE'S SCHOOL ISN'T GOING TO SELL MAGAZINE SUBSCRIPTIONS AGAIN THIS YEAR
HALLELUJAH!
WAIT- WHAT'S THE BAD NEWS?
GOOD AFTERNOON, SIR. WOULD YOU LIKE TO HELP ME RAISE MONEY FOR MY SCHOOL BY PURCHASING SOME DELICIOUS CANDY?

ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


I CAN'T CALL YOU BUNNY!
Well, you have to. Once I have my name legally changed from Atomo to Bunny, you have no choice.
Unless you want to refer to me as the girl formerly known as Atomo.
But why Bunny?!
Because I think it's dainty.

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're alluring! You attract people to you. You're an independent nonconformist who chooses his or her own path in life. You can be very popular, although sometimes you choose to work behind the scenes. You're highly intuitive and psychic. This is a year of endings to create room for next year, which is a new beginning.
Birthdate of: Freddie Prinze Jr., actor; James Van Der Beek, actor; Camryn Manheim, actress.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): Be careful about making commitments or promises you make to friends today. Better to wait until tomorrow. Whatever you agree to today will probably need readjustment in the future.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): Think twice before you agree to deadlines for bosses. You might be unrealistic. New information or changing circumstances could prohibit you from meeting these deadlines. (Ouch.)

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): This is not a good day to book travel plans or register for courses at a university or any institution of advanced training. If you want to do this, wait until tomorrow.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): This is not an ideal day for important financial transactions (especially if you're thinking of sharing something, giving something away or spending money). You might regret it later.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): This is a curious day. Conversations with close friends and partners are possibly confusing. It's a good day for fun and creativity; a poor day for serious, committed decisions.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Tread carefully at work today. Don't make any promises that you might not be able to keep. Major purchases related to your job should wait until tomorrow.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): This is a marvelous, fun-loving, creative, artistic day! It's also a wonderful day for romance, play, the theater and creative activities with children. Enjoy!

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Enjoy time spent with family members today. This is an excellent day to invite relatives to visit. Avoid major expenditures for your home, however.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): You're busy with errands, conversations, short trips and shopping! Nevertheless, resist the urge to make major purchases today. Whatever you buy will likely not meet your expectations.

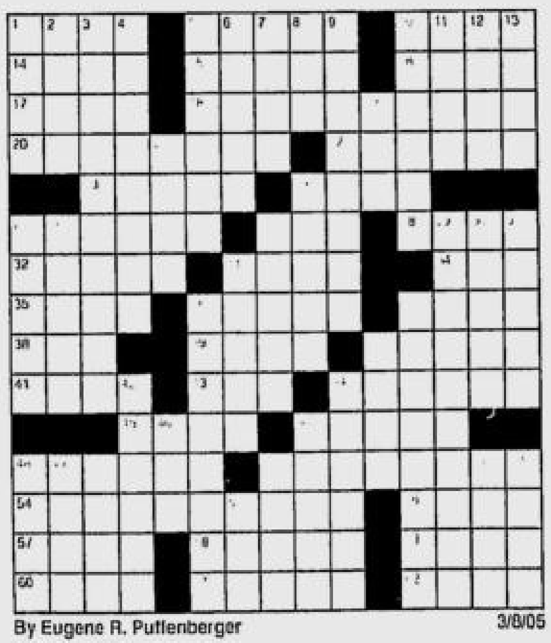
CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): This is not a good day for major financial decisions of any kind. This is also not a good day for major purchases. Delay important business and monetary decisions until tomorrow. Just bide your time.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): You feel like a helium balloon with the string cut. You're sailing off into space. Enjoy your day, but avoid important decisions and purchases.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): This is a good day to meditate or do yoga, or to contemplate beauty in quiet surroundings. You feel a bit otherworldly.

DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Belly or heart follower
5 Starboard side
10 Monterrey money
14 Goatee site
15 Other side
16 Stead
17 __ at windmills
18 Lion
20 10/23-to-11/21 births
22 Deed holders
23 Armed robbery
24 Guinness of "Star Wars"
25 Summer ermines
27 Charge
28 Work with needles
32 Nina's sister ship
33 Scots' trillings
34 NASA's ISS partner
35 Acorn producers
36 Stan's comic partner
37 Peril
38 Mineral deposit
39 Play part
40 Scoundrel
41 Zhivago's beloved
43 Calendar unit
44 Showy bird's male
45 Spunk
47 Blue-dye plants
48 Ribbed fabric
51 Insufficiency
54 Terrier
56 Scrutinized
57 Delta material
58 Longest river in France
59 E-mail button
60 Links pegs
61 Passover dinner
62 Three-spot

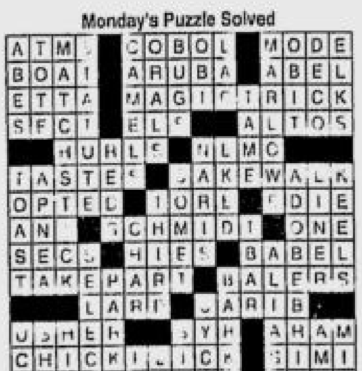


By Eugene R. Puffenberger
Houston, TX

3/8/05

DOWN
1 Exploits
2 "Blondie" creator Young
3 None
4 Beseeches
5 Negligent
6 Fort Knox bar
7 Birthstones
8 "__ Pinafore"
9 Of an Alpine region
10 German physicist Max
11 Ireland
12 Oracle
13 What we have
19 Have debts
21 Pocketed bread?
24 Eagles' residence
25 Thread reel
26 Coronet
27 Completely
29 Contrary filly?
30 Publication
31 Already claimed
33 Swell
36 Numbers in sequence
37 Driver's license requirement
40 Backside
42 Shoelace ends
44 Less affluent
46 Tease
47 "__ the Wild Things Are"
48 Attention-getting sound
49 Dust Bowl migrant
50 Old-time journalist Ernie
51 Low, wooden platform
52 Sarazen or Hackman
53 MacDonald's singing partner
55 Shad output

Monday's Puzzle Solved



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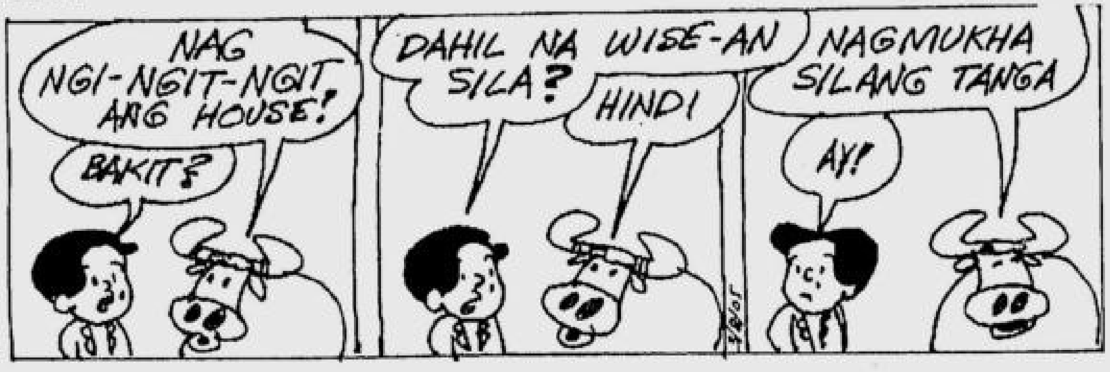
3/8/05

GASFAR
fuel saving tips
CHECK FAN BELT TENSION AND CONDITION.
Regularly check the looseness or tightness of the fan belt. Also check for cracks.

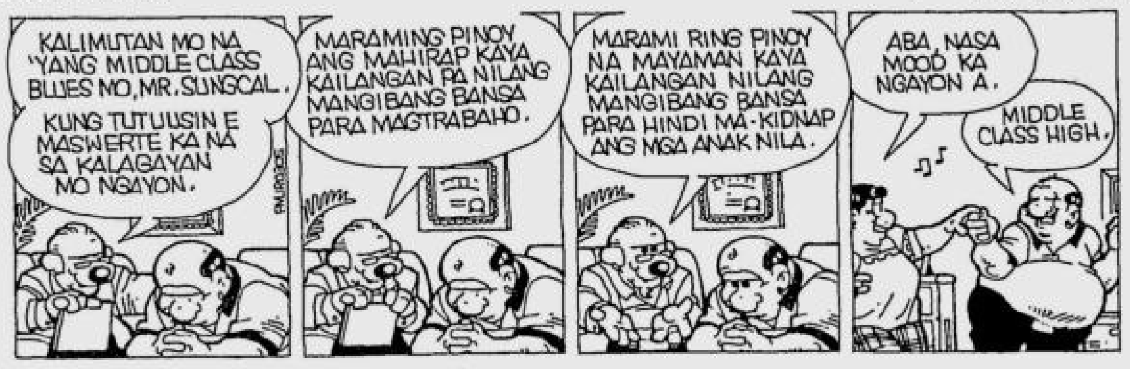
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


NAG NGI-NGIT-NGIT ANG HOUSE!
BAKIT?
DAHIL NA WISE-AN SILA?
HINDI
NAGMUKHA SILANG TANGA
AY!

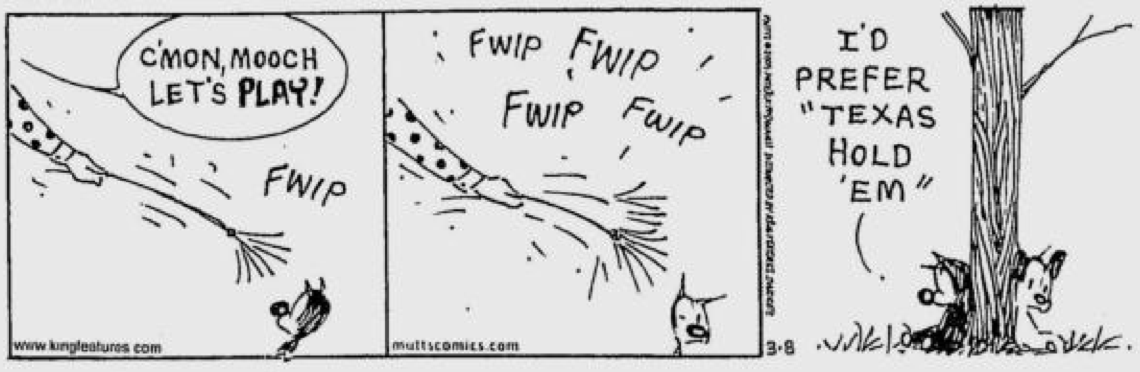
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


KALIMUTAN MO NA 'YANG MIDDLE CLASS BLUES MO, MR. SUNGCAL.
KUNG TUTUUSIN E MASWERTE KA NA SA KALAGAYAN MO NGAYON.
MARAMING PINOY ANG MAHIRAP KAYA KAILANGAN PA NILANG MANGIBANG BANSA PARA MAGTRABAHO.
MARAMI RING PINOY NA MAYAMAN KAYA KAILANGAN NILANG MANGIBANG BANSA PARA HINDI MA-KIDNAP ANG MGA ANAK NILA.
ABA, NASA MOOD KA NGAYON A.
MIDDLE CLASS HIGH.

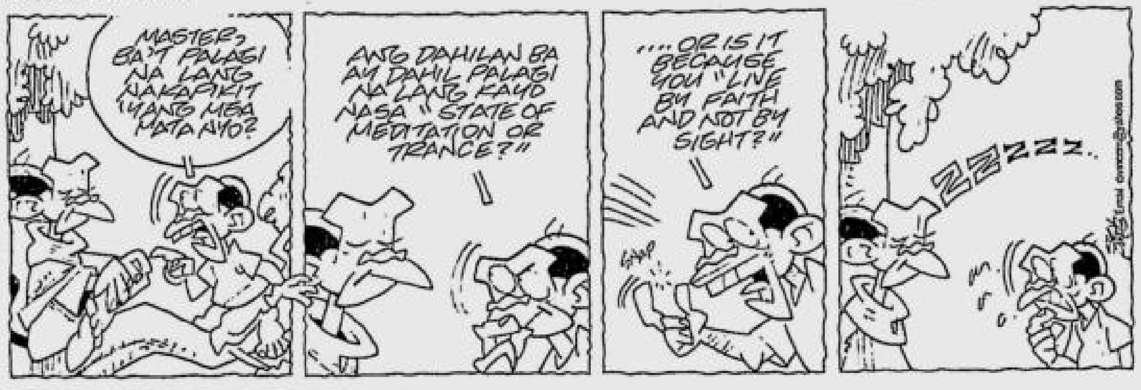
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


C'MON, MOOCH LET'S PLAY!
FWIP
FWIP FWIP FWIP FWIP
I'D PREFER "TEXAS HOLD 'EM"
www.kingfeatures.com
muttscomics.com
3-8

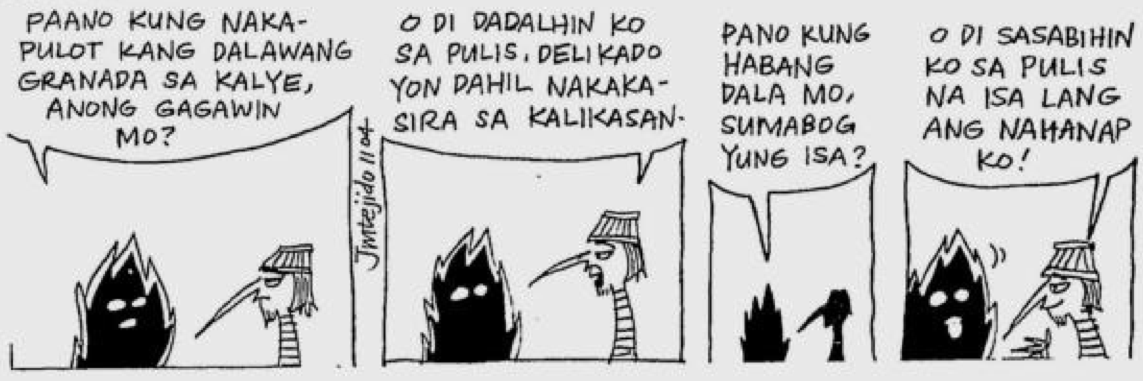
DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


MASTER, BA'T PALAGI NA LANG NAKAPIKIT 'YANG MGA MATA NYO?
ANG DAHILAN BA AY DAHIL PALAGI NA LANG KAYO NASA "STATE OF MEDITATION OR TRANCE?"
....OR IS IT BECAUSE YOU "LIVE BY FAITH AND NOT BY SIGHT?"
ZZZZZ..

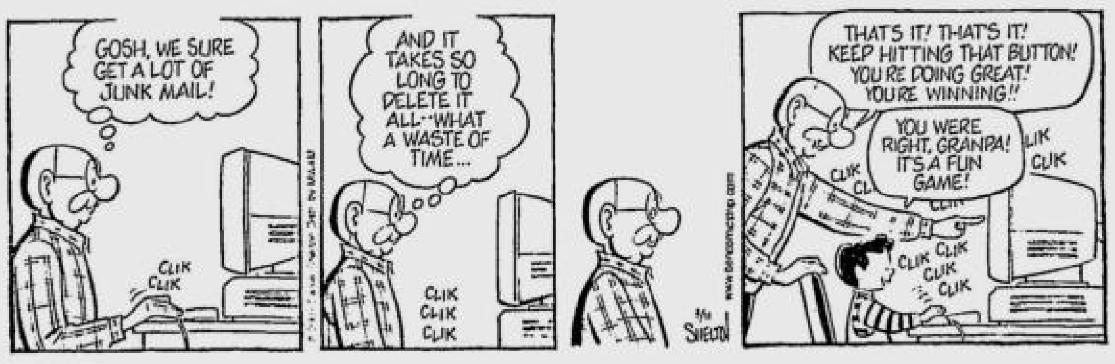
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


PAANO KUNG NAKAPULOT KANG DALAWANG GRANADA SA KALYE, ANONG GAGAWIN MO?
O DI DADALHIN KO SA PULIS. DELIKADO YON DAHIL NAKAKASIRA SA KALIKASAN.
PANO KUNG HABANG DALA MO, SUMABOG YUNG ISA?
O DI SASABIHIN KO SA PULIS NA ISA LANG ANG NAHANAP KO!

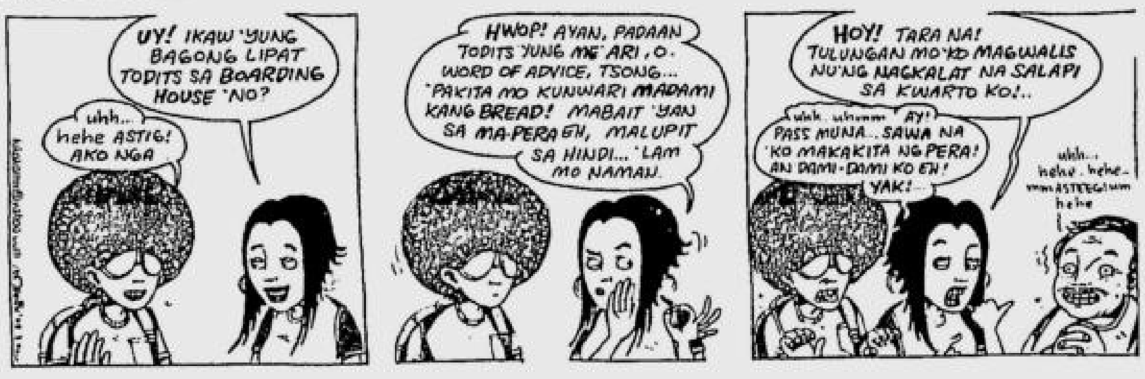
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


GOSH, WE SURE GET A LOT OF JUNK MAIL!
CLIK CLIK
AND IT TAKES SO LONG TO DELETE IT ALL--WHAT A WASTE OF TIME...
CLIK CLIK CLIK
THAT'S IT! THAT'S IT! KEEP HITTING THAT BUTTON! YOU'RE DOING GREAT! YOU'RE WINNING!!
YOU WERE RIGHT, GRANPA! IT'S A FUN GAME!
CLIK CLIK CLIK CLIK

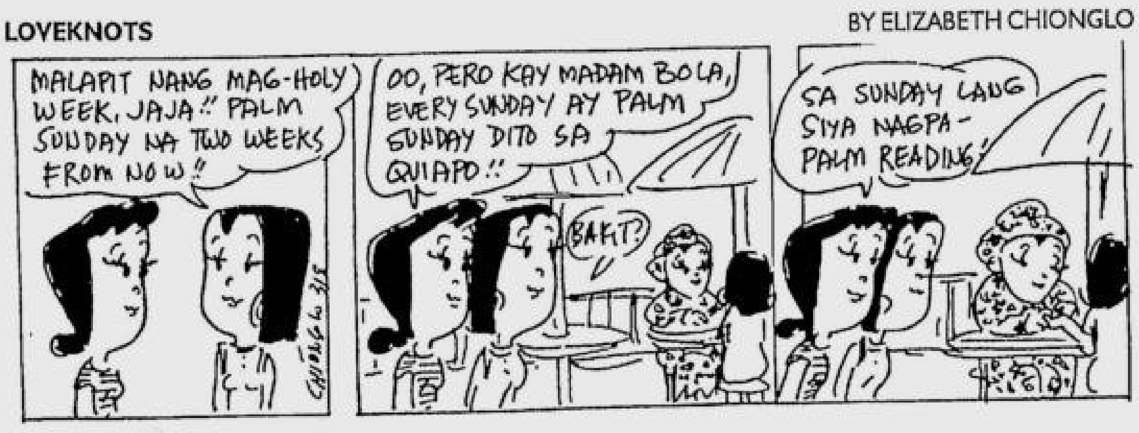
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


UY! IKAW 'YUNG BAGONG LIPAT TODITS SA BOARDING HOUSE 'NO?
uhh.. hehe ASTIG! AKO NGA
HWOP! AYAN, PADAAN TODITS YUNG MG' ARI, O. WORD OF ADVICE, TSONG... "PAKITA MO KUNWARI MADAMI KANG BREAD! MABAIT 'YAN SA MA-PERA EH, MALUPIT SA HINDI..." 'LAM MO NAMAN.
HOY! TARA NA! TULUNGAN MO 'KO MAGWALIS NU'NG NAGKALAT NA SALAPI SA KWARTO KO!..
uhh.. uhmm AY! PASS MUNA... SAWA NA 'KO MAKAKITA NG PERA! AN DAMI-DAMI KO EH! YAK!...
uhh... hehe. hehe- mmASTEEGIum hehe

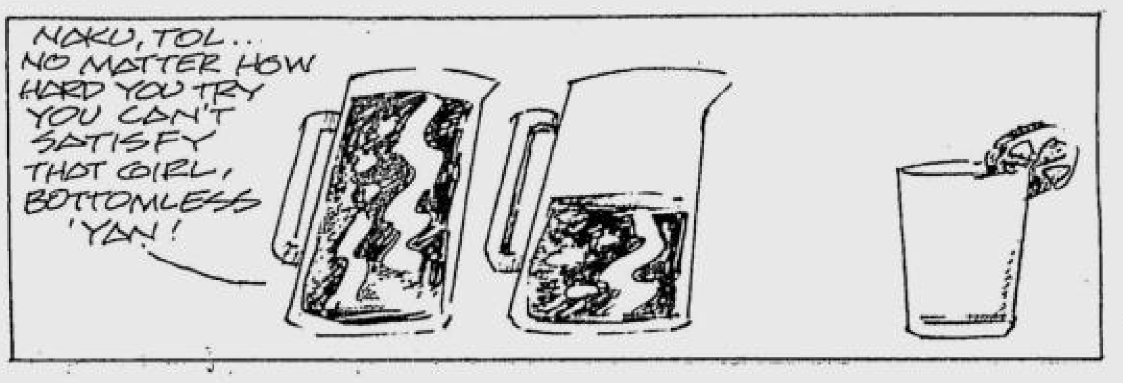
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


MALAPIT NANG MAG-HOLY WEEK, JAJA!! PALM SUNDAY NA TWO WEEKS FROM NOW!!
OO, PERO KAY MADAM BOLA, EVERY SUNDAY AY PALM SUNDAY DITO SA QUIAPO!!
BAKIT?
SA SUNDAY LANG SIYA NAGPA-PALM READING!

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


NOKU, TOL.. NO MATTER HOW HARD YOU TRY YOU CAN'T SATISFY THAT GIRL, BOTTOMLESS 'YAN!

Main plot patterns for movies

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

Aspiring filmmakers should be able to explore all possibilities

AT A FILM forum last month, an aspiring screenwriter asked us for tips on movie stories he could write that would be more varied than his usually limited and predictable plot concepts.

We suggested that he could solve his problem by familiarizing himself in greater detail with the main plot patterns that stories can be listed under. For each category, he could then think up as many possibilities as he could. At the end of a long process, we hoped that he would find that had thought up many more stories than he would ordinarily have managed.

Perhaps you'd like to go through the process yourself? The plot patterns:

The reluctant hero

A cynic or a callow youth discovers or rediscovers the hero within. These movies often provide a chance to observe moral judgements and choices (examples: "Casablanca" and "Star Wars").

Road movies

People who start out not knowing or even disliking each other to learn respect, like and even love each other, often while traveling together to accomplish a goal ("The Wizard of Oz," "Toy Story," "It Happened One Night").

At other times, it is a group of diverse people who must confront some challenge together. Another variation features people who are somehow connected, but have not seen each other for a while, or do not know each other well, like family members or former classmates.

Rise and fall

A character with ambition and mission (and, usually, good intentions) achieves success, and then wants too much or forgets his original purpose. This popular theme goes back to the ancient Greek dramas and myths, where it was called "hubris," a human's attempt to be like the gods ("Citizen Kane").

Growing up

One or more people come of age, learning sometimes painful lessons and responsibility. This is often combined with one of the other plot patterns ("Little Women").

Redemption

People who have lost their self-respect or integrity find it. Or people who never had it develop it. ("Bad Day at Black Rock," "Gunfight at the OK Corral.") We often see the hero overcoming a tragic flaw—or learning his lesson but being felled by the flaw ("The Gunfighter").

Fish out of water

Someone outside our culture or society throws our cultural assumptions or personal foibles into stark relief by highlighting a fresh perspective ("King of Hearts," "The Gods Must be Crazy").

Boy who cried wolf

People who don't tell the truth have to deal with the consequences. This theme is often found in romantic movies ("Daddy Long Legs"). It is also very popular in comedies ("Mrs. Doubtfire").

Cat in the hat

An ordinary person's life is disrupted by a wacky but exciting and lovable outsider, revealing to the ordinary person how more there is to life ("Bringing Up Baby").

Triumph of the underdog

Someone no one believes in, who does not believe in himself or herself, grows, learns and achieves an all-but-impossible goal ("Rocky").

Boy meets, loses, gets girl

This, of course, is the classic romance ("On the Town," "Top Hat").

The quest

The search is for whatever the hero or heroine is so eager to get. These movies involve a search for treasure, solving a mystery, or saving the world. Sometimes, the hero is a professional (like James Bond movies). But, more often, the hero is an ordinary person thrust into terror and intrigue, and called upon to exercise extraordinary courage and skill ("Raiders of the Lost Ark").

Biography

These movies allow us a peek into the life of an interesting or unusual person. They often include elements from the underdog or coming-of-age plot genre as well ("The Spirit of St. Louis," "The Great White Hope").

Disaster

Disasters, both natural and man-made, provide daunting challenges for protagonists to surmount ("Independence Day").

Medical dramas

Illnesses also test our capacity to rise above problems, and the struggle makes us better people.

DID YOU KNOW...

Actor **Dingdong Dantes** was with a couple of friends at Dusit Hotel's Fiesta San Miguel last Thursday when he was asked to join the band onstage. Dingdong gamely played the drums on two numbers, much to the delight of the customers, who applauded him enthusiastically.

"SIDEWAYS" IS THE BEST PICTURE OF THE YEAR!
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Rarely does a comedy come along that deserves to be taken seriously.
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2 (DOLBY) LEMONY SNICKET'S GP
3 (DOLBY) MILLION DOLLAR BABY PG13
4 (DOLBY) CONSTANTINE PG13
PREMIERE
(DOLBY) AVIATOR PG13

CINEMA 2000
Cinema 2000 Waltermart Makati
Waltermart Center, Chino Roces Ave. cor. Antonio Arnaiz Pio del Pilar, Makati City
Tel 816.4214 / 816.4216
1 HITCH
2 SOON TO OPEN
3 SOON TO OPEN
4 SON OF THE MASK

SUPER CINERAMA
Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto
tel 733.4238
1 (DOLBY) RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 RESERVED
4 RESERVED
5 RESERVED

Masagana CINEMA
(Pasay) tel 833.3290 / 833.3274
1 MASK-2 SON OF THE MASK
2 CONSTANTINE
3 SAKSI DRIVER

starmall Movies
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(Mandaluyong) tel 724.4986
1 RESERVED
2 RESERVED
3 QUIJA BOARD
4 (DOLBY DIGITAL EX) CONSTANTINE
5 MALAGKIT

METROPOLIS star
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1 QUIJA BOARD
2 MALAGKIT
3 CONSTANTINE
4 SON OF THE MASK
5 (DOLBY) MILLION DOLLAR BABY
6 HITCH

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1 (DOLBY) SCHOOL OF SEDUCTION
2 RESERVED

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(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72
1 (DDS) LEMONY SNICKETS
2 (SDDS) HITCH
3 (DTS) CONSTANTINE
4 GOLD (DTS) RAY
5 GOLD (DOLBY) MILLION DOLAR BABY
6 GOLD (SDDS) THE AVIATOR
7 GOLD (DOLBY) HITCH
8 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
9 BUNSINSABA
10 MASK-2 SON OF THE MASK

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MILLION DOLLAR BABY
BUNSHINSABA
SON OF THE MASK
LEMONY SNICKET'S
CONSTANTINE
THE AVIATOR
PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
RAY
SIDEWAYS

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2 CONSTANTINE
3 HITCH
4 BUNSHINSABA
5 LET THE LOVE BEGIN

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2 ELEKTRA
3 NIGHT JOB
4

Universal
(Manila) tel 733.2470
1 SOON TO OPEN

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03
1 (DOLBY EX) HITCH
2 CONSTANTINE
3 (DTS ES) LEMONY
4 INFECTION

Cine Nepo
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.0121
1 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
2 LEMONY SNICKETS
3 (DOLBY) HITCH
4 (DTS) CONSTANTINE

Cine Nepo
(Dagupan City) tel (075) 515.8489
1 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
2 FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX
3 (DOLBY) SHALL WE DANCE
4 (DTS) ELEKTRA

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007
1 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
2 FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX

EASTWOOD CINEMAS
(Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave (C-5) Quezon City)
tel 687.6963 or 72
1 (DOLBY) LEMONY SNICKET'S
2 (DOLBY) HITCH
3 (DOLBY) MILLION DOLLAR BABY
4 (DOLBY) CONSTANTINE

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Movie Theatres of the New Millenium

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383
1 INFECTION
2 (DTS) LET THE LOVE BEGIN
3 (DOLBY) LEMONY SNICKETS
4 CONSTANTINE

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Biñan) tel (049) 411.1146
1 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
2 (DOLBY) LEMONY SNICKETS
3 (DTS) CONSTANTINE
4 INFECTION

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771
1 SHALL WE DANCE
2 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
3 (DOLBY) FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729
1 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
2 MAD HOUSE
3 (DOLBY) ASSAULT ON PRECINT 13
4 (DTS) MEET THE FOCKERS

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel) tel (044) 795.3327
1 CONSTANTINE
2 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
3 (DOLBY) INFECTION

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276
1 (SDDS) PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
2 SAGAD
3 SAKSI DRIVER
4 (DTS) KING RAT

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202
1 (DOLBY) CONSTANTINE
2 LEMONY SNICKETS
3 (DTS) INFECTION
4 SHE WALK BY NIGHT
5 LET THE LOVE BEGIN

Mega Center Mall
(Cabanatuan City) tel (044) 463.3283
1 BABY GENIUSES - 2
2 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
3 (DTS) FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX
4 (DOLBY) CONSTANTINE

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790
1 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
2 ASSAULT ON PRECINT 13
3 SIDEWAY
4 HELLWOLF

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029
1 SAKSI DRIVER
2 ASSAULT ON PRECINT 13

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Children below 13 yrs. old will only be allowed if accompanied by a parent or adult
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12:55 / 3:40 / 6:25 / 9:10
MILLION DOLLAR BABY
12:40 / 3:30 / 6:25 / 9:10
OUIJA BOARD-BUNSHINSABA
12:50 / 3:00 / 5:10 / 7:20 / 9:30
SON OF THE MASK
1:30 / 3:50 / 6:10 / 8:30
SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS
12:30 / 2:45 / 5:00 / 7:15 / 9:30
CONSTANTINE
12:30 / 2:45 / 5:00 / 7:15 / 9:30
THE AVIATOR
12:00 / 3:20 / 6:40
PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
1:00 / 3:50 / 6:40 / 9:30
RAY - LIFE STORY OF RAY CHARLES
4:05 / 9:25
SIDEWAYS
1:30 / 6:50

ALI MALL CINEMAS
❶ MILLION DOLLAR BABY
11:50 / 2:40 / 5:30 / 8:20
❷ CONSTANTINE
11:20 / 1:35 / 3:50 / 6:05 / 8:20
❸ HITCH
12:05 / 2:50 / 5:35 / 8:20
❹ OUIJA BOARD-BUNSHINSABA
11:45 / 1:55 / 4:05 / 6:15 / 8:25
❺ LET THE LOVE BEGIN
12:00 / 2:05 / 4:10 / 6:15 / 8:20
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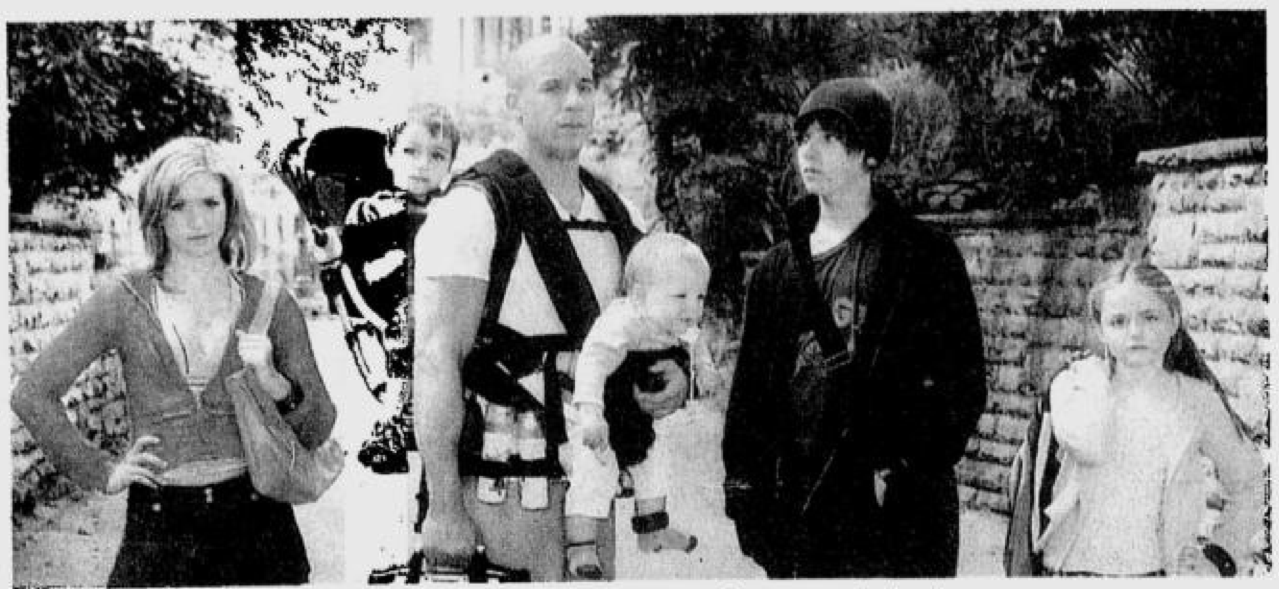

IN "THE PACIFIER," Vin Diesel (center) tries to play his screen action persona for laughs.

Vin Diesel is not funny

LOS ANGELES—Didn't Hollywood learn anything from "Mr. Nanny"? Cuddly, mischievous kids and over-muscled tough guys from the Sylvester Stallone Method School don't mix.

Vin Diesel is not funny in so many ways in the family action comedy "The Pacifier," a vain attempt to broaden his prospects beyond the bust-'em-up thriller, a genre in which he's already grown stale.

The formula is as unsuccessful as it was in 1993's "Mr. Nanny," which starred Hulk Hogan as a wrestler who hires on as nursemaid to a gang of spoiled brats.

Here, Diesel is a Navy SEAL assigned to watch over the children of a slain security expert, a family ranging from a puke-prone baby and a destructive toddler to a couple of rebellious teens.

Diesel's the "Pacifier," get it? The wit dries up from there in this brainless concoction from director Adam Shankman ("Bringing Down the House") and screenwriters Thomas Lennon and Robert Ben Garant ("Taxi").

As crackerjack rescue-ops leader Shane Wolfe, Diesel tries to apply his "my-way-or-the-highway" approach to baby-sitting the five Plummer kids and protecting them from nebulous villains trying to find a wayward satellite-defense program developed by the kids' late father.

The children—led by Brittany Snow and Max Thieriot as the surly elders and Morgan York as the adorable middle kid who becomes Shane's protege—battle back, putting Diesel through a succession of stilted pratfalls.

Boring baritone

His monotonous baritone rumblings worked well in small doses for "Saving Private Ryan," his first major film, for the voice of an alien robot in the animated tale "The Iron Giant" and for the small horror hit "Pitch Black," which took an ensemble approach that did not put the entire movie on Diesel's back.

Since then, Diesel's string of dark anti-hero roles has pretty much exhausted his acting range, culminating in last year's atrocious "Pitch Black" follow-up "The Chronicles of Riddick."

In "The Pacifier," Diesel tries to play his action persona for laughs, but he simply cannot curl his mouth around lines meant to be funny. His stiffness is exacerbated by lackluster action sequences, sapping the movie of Diesel's one strong suit, breaking heads credibly.

The filmmakers toss their talented supporting cast to the wolves, particularly Lauren Graham of "The Gilmore Girls," who's forced to amble awkwardly through a vacuous part as a school principal with a romantic interest in Diesel's Shane (as good an actress as she is, Graham's not good enough to make that last part believable).

Faith Ford has barely more than a few walk-ons as the Plummer children's perky mom, and Brad Garrett is terribly annoying as an autocratic vice principal.

Carol Kane is just a woebegone presence, screeching in one of her accents of uncertain origin as nanny to the youngest Plummer children, a role that's a step down even from her shrill bit part in last year's "Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen."

Here's a helpful hint to pass the time should you be the unfortunate parent assigned to escort the kids to this comatose comedy:

Every time Vin Diesel starts to speak, imagine shoving an adult-sized pacifier in his mouth. It doesn't make the movie go any faster, but it gives you something to do while you're busy not laughing. *AP*

Bacall bio, part 2

NEW YORK—The publication this week of the second volume of Lauren Bacall's autobiography promises to shed light on the screen legend's marriage to Humphrey Bogart, and her sense of loss at the death of Katherine Hepburn.

"By Myself and Then Some," published by Harper Collins, is a sequel to Bacall's best-selling 1979 memoir "By Myself," and offers an update on her personal and professional life, up to and including her role in the 2004 movie "Birth" with Nicole Kidman.

Bacall offers a candid snapshot of her disappointment when, after finally being nominated for an Oscar for her role as Barbra Streisand's mother in "The Mirror Has Two Faces" (1996), she lost.

As Kevin Spacey approached the stage to present the award for Best Supporting actress, Bacall said her heart was beating so wildly that she was unsure she would be able to even accept the award if she won.

But the Oscar went to Juliette Binoche for "The English Patient."

"I felt very alone," Bacall admitted. "No matter how you slice it, this is a ball for winners." *AFP*

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Golden Screen sights and shrieks

JUDY ANN SANTOS: Best Actress, drama, "Sabel"

By Marinel R. Cruz
Photos by Jim Guiao Punzalan

THE SECOND Golden Screen Awards ceremony last Saturday lasted only two hours, but it was action-packed, certainly to the people who turned up to watch the proceedings at the Carlos P. Romulo auditorium of the RCBC Plaza in Makati City.

One former couple deliberately, and very noticeably avoided one another. So did one screen team.

Two groups of fans competed in screaming their lungs out.

At least three winners were stunned for getting awards.

Fiery start

The show began with a forceful speech from Entertainment Press Society president Jun Nardo, who lambasted "unfair" people questioning the group's credibility. "*Tadtarin man ng intriga, magpapatuloy pa rin kami,*" Nardo said.

Jomari Yllana, nominated Best Actor (drama) for his work in "Minsan Pa," was spotted at the left side of the auditorium. Former girlfriend Ara Mina, who won Best Supporting Actress, stayed backstage almost throughout the show.

Jom was careful not to go up the stage when "Minsan Pa" producer Joji Alonso received the Best Picture trophy. With Alonso on stage were Best Director winner Jeffrey Jeturian and, of course, Ara.

Best Actor (drama) Cesar Montano ("Panaghoy sa Suba") came with his wife Sunshine Cruz. Juliana Palermo, Montano's leading lady in the movie and one of the awards presenters, was never seen anywhere near the couple.

Shine and Juliana earlier figured in a heated word war over rumors that Cesar and Juliana had an affair during the shooting. Juliana accused Shine of sending her nasty text messages; Shine claimed Juliana was using Cesar to get media mileage.

"We didn't try to avoid [Juliana]," Shine told INQUIRER Entertainment on Monday. "Buboy (Cesar's nickname) and I just didn't see her until she went up the stage to present an award."

She continued: "People questioned Buboy for not mentioning her in his acceptance speech. But Buboy didn't mention anyone, anyway. It's understood that the movie would not be made without the help of the whole crew *and* his leading lady. I admit that I got hurt about what happened. But it's all water under the bridge now. I know that I love my husband and he loves me, and that's what's important."

Ara Mina said she didn't expect to win over veteran actresses Hilda Koronel ("Santa Santita") and Jacklyn Jose ("Naglalayag"), so she stepped out of the auditorium after her opening number with Rufa Mae Quinto.

In his acceptance speech, Jeffrey Jeturian said his Best Director award (for "Minsan Pa") was unexpected, "*kasi walang* leakage."

Maricel Soriano, Best Actress (comedy, for "I Will Survive"), said she was surprised to hear her name being called while she was backstage. The Diamond Star had been resting after doing a song number.

Best Actor Eric Quizon (comedy, for "So Happy Together") was apparently so startled that, in his speech, he said: "I feel *breast* to be the son of the greatest comedian." He meant "blessed," of course.

The Vilmanians and Noranians occupied either side of the auditorium, screaming at every mention of their idols' names and movies. Santos and Aunor were both nominated for Best Actress (drama).

Same thing

When Judy Ann Santos won as Best Actress (drama, for "Sabel") several Vilmanians said: "*Okay lang,* Santos *pa rin.*"

The Lino Brocka Lifetime Achievement award was given to Mona Lisa, the consistently extraordinary character actress who played the vengeful mother of Hilda Koronel in the 1979 film "Insiang."

Donita Rose did very well as host. Off-cam during breaks, she would talk to the audience. She even complimented Judy Ann for her dress.

At around 11 p.m., the show was finished—the shortest awards ceremony so far in these parts.

There were only two production numbers. The first was a duet between Ara Mina and Rufa Mae Quinto, who performed a Kylie Minogue tune while presenting the year's Best Picture nominees. The second was Maricel Soriano's tribute to the late Action King Fernando Poe Jr.

(E-mail the author at mcruz@inquirer.com.ph)

MARICEL SORIANO, Best Actress, comedy, "I Will Survive"

CESAR MONTANO, Best Actor, drama

ARA MINA, Best Supporting Actress

SIZZLING opener by Ara Mina and Rufa Mae Quinto

MONA LISA, Lifetime Achievement Award

JOHNNY DELGADO, Best Supporting Actor, "Santa Santita"

ERIC QUIZON, Best Actor, comedy

SORIANO pays tribute to "Da King."

WINNERS ALL (from left) Nonong Buencamino (musical score), Joji Alonso (producer), Armando "Bing" Lao (original screenplay), Jeffrey Jetturian (director), Santos, Montano, Soriano, Ara Mina, Iza Calzado (breakthrough performance) and Quizon

DENNIS Trillo: Breakthrough Performance by an Actor

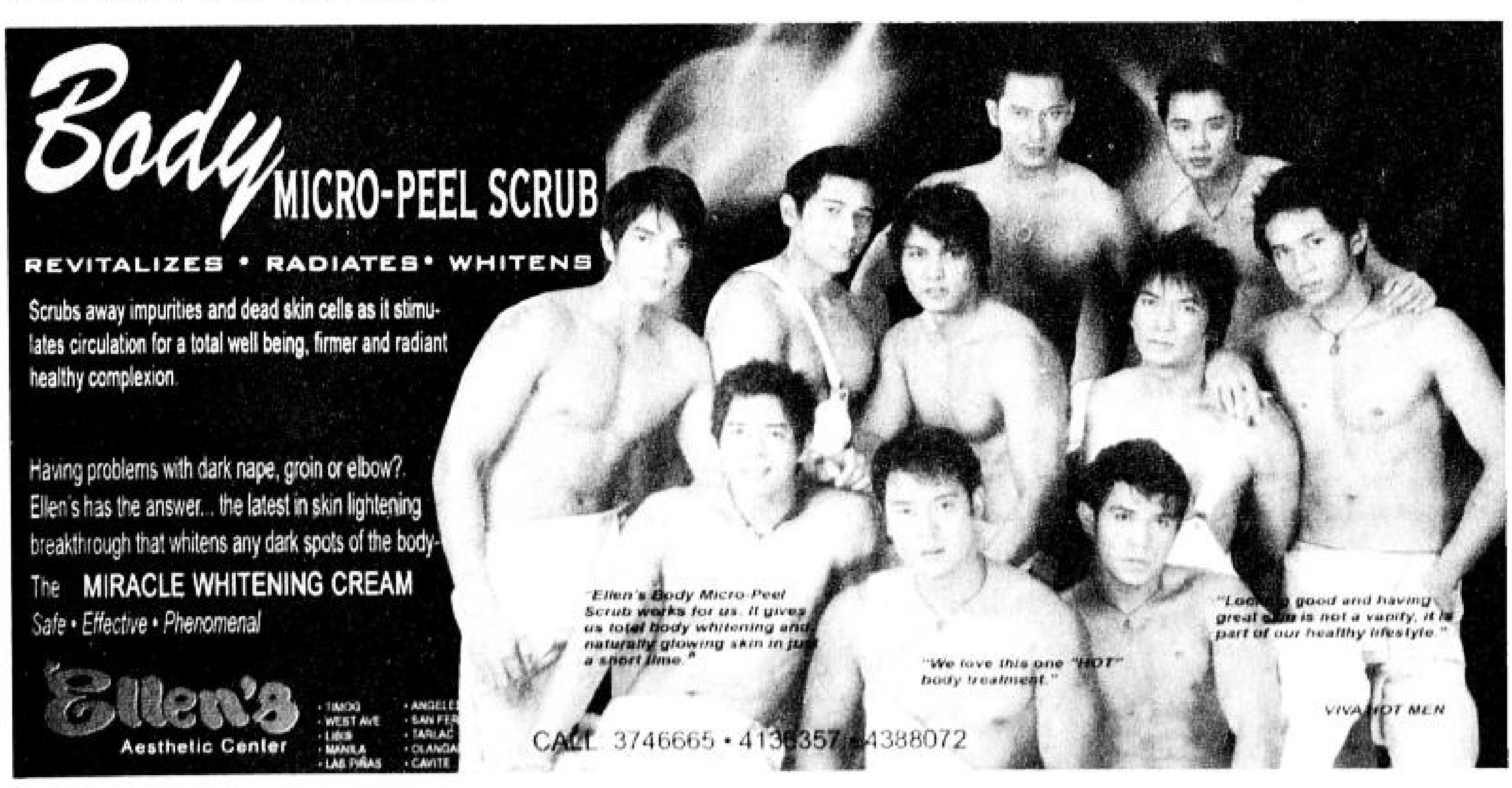
Come Away With Me

GRAMMY winner Norah Jones performs on March 12 at the Araneta Coliseum. The singer-pianist has become a global phenomenon following the record-breaking sales of her two albums: "Come Away With Me" (2002) and "Feels Like Home" (2004).

Defying initial projections, "Come Away" has so far sold eight million copies and lodged itself on the Billboard charts for over a hundred weeks. "Feels Like Home" sold more than a million copies in its first week.

"Everyone's trying to figure out what she has and attempts to do the same," says Adam Levy, Jones' guitarist, and the chattiest member of her band. "But it's not like that swing revival. It's not like you can buy a zoot suit and a sax and copy what she does. Her music is an honest amalgam of everything she likes. It's this cocktail of Ray Charles and Etta James, and Bill Evans on piano, and these simple country vocals, the way Loretta Lynn sings, so direct you can't ignore it. You hear all that in her music. And that's just who she is."

The Norah Jones Manila Tour 2005 is produced by ALV Events International.



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MISS Hawaiian Tropic is all about empowerment, "regardless of religion, ethnicity, marital or social status."

Beauty tilt welcomes married women

By Armin Adina
Photos by Johnny Villena

SINGLE moms and married women can now compete with single girls in a beauty contest.

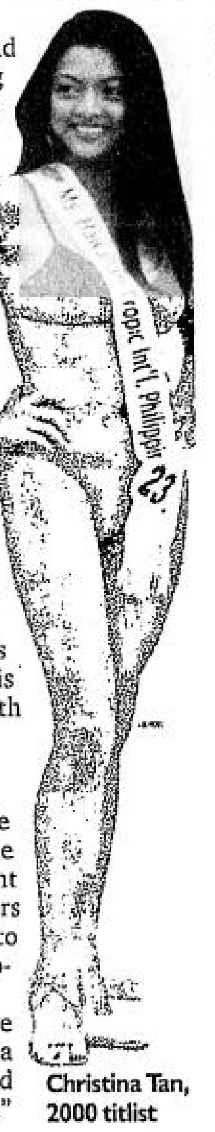
The Miss Hawaiian Tropic is changing local pageants by allowing married women with or without kids to participate in the search for the country's first official representative to the 23rd edition of the international pageant which will be held in Las Vegas, USA.

All women aged 16 and above are welcome, as long as they are fit and practice a healthy lifestyle.

The pageant, according to the organizers, is an "equal-opportunity experience. It does not discriminate [on the basis of] religion, ethnicity, marital [or] social status."

Even women with previous pageant experience or who are currently holding a beauty title are not banned from joining the contest.

There are 26 candidates in the local contest this year. Four are married with children.



Christina Tan, 2000 titlist

Married hopefuls

Nikki Pahutan is a single mom with two kids. She said she joined the pageant "to reach out to all mothers and encourage them to break out of the stereotype."

The 32-year-old executive urged women to "live a healthy lifestyle, enjoy a good social life, and have a career."

Faith Amigo was a runner-up in the Mutya ng Pilipinas beauty contest.

"Women should not stop being the best that they could be," said the 32-year-old mother of one. "We (married candidates) are like big sisters in this competition. We are constantly asked for advice by the younger and single girls."

Christina Tan was first runner-up to Nina Ricci Alagao, who won Binibining Pilipinas-Universe in 2000.

That same year, Christina was declared "Miss Supreme Energy." The 26-year-old model enjoys target shooting. "My family owns a shooting range in Bulacan," she said, adding that her father made her a customized gun "with holes drilled on the extended barrel."

Single and ambitious

Ira Custodio, another model by profession, said she considered herself a pageant veteran. She landed second place in a recently concluded bikini contest.

Model Richel Halili, 22, wants to win a beauty title and "achieve supermodel status."

Thea Anzures, 23, is just as determined as Richel. "This pageant is different, it values women empowerment," explained this writer, who loves the sea and keeps fit by wake boarding, diving and swimming.

More than 45 countries will vie for the title Miss Hawaiian Tropic International.

Celebrities first discovered in the pageant include TV host Brooke Burke, herself a mother who appears in sexy calendar pinups, actress Carmen Electra and model Marla Maples Trump.

Will a married mom steal the crown from a single girl?

Find out on March 10 when the first Miss Hawaiian Tropic International-Philippines is crowned at the NBC Tent in Bonifacio Global City.

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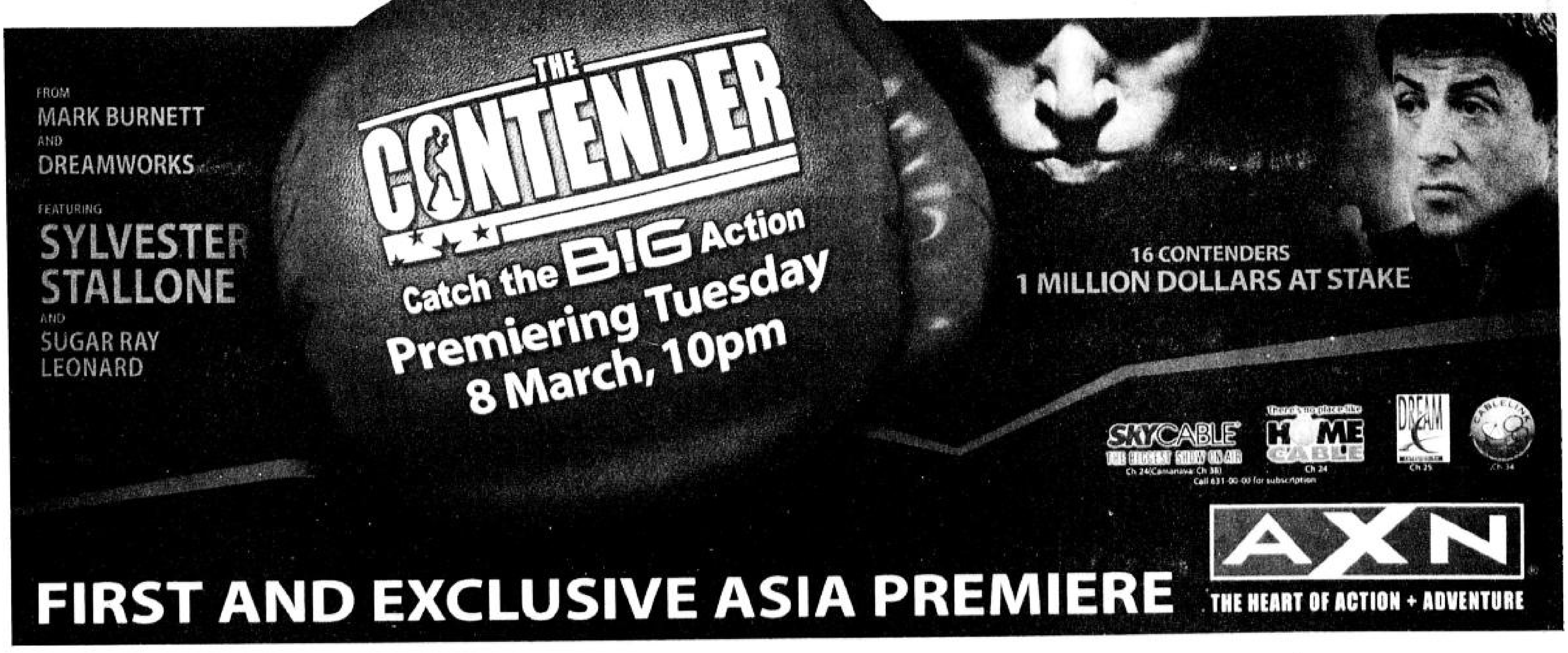

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GALLERIA

632-9115/16

1 CONSTANTINE • THX
11:20 2:00 4:40 7:20 10:00
2 A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS
12:20 2:45 5:10 7:35 10:00
3 SON OF THE MASK 2
10:45 1:00 3:15 5:30 7:45 10:00
4 BUNSHINSABA
11:10 1:20 3:30 5:40 7:50 10:00
5 HITCH
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00
6 MILLION DOLLAR BABY
10:20 1:15 4:10 7:05 10:00
7 PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
12:40 3:40 6:40 9:40
8 INFECTION
12 50 3:05 5:20 7:35 9:50
9 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00
10 MEET THE FOCKERS
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00

ERMITA

536-7809 to 12

1 HITCH
10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
2 SON OF THE MASK 2
10:30 12:45 3:00 5:15 7:30 9:45
3 CONSTANTINE
10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
4 INFECTION
10:30 12:45 3:00 5:15 7:30 9:45
5 A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS
10:20 12:40 3:00 5:20 7:40 10:00
6 BUNSHINSABA
10:30 12:25 2:20 4:15 6:10 8:05 10:00
7 MILLION DOLLAR BABY
10:50 1:35 4:20 7:05 9:50

METRO EAST

682-8193 • 682-8199

1 INFECTION
10.50 12:50 2:50 4:50 6:50
2 A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS
11:20 1:40 4:00 6:20 9:00
3 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
11:20 1:40 4:00 6:20 9:00
4 SON OF THE MASK 2
12:20 2:40 5:00 7:20 9:30
5 MILLION DOLLAR BABY
10:25 1:25 4:25 7:25 10:30
6 HITCH
11:50 2:30 5:10 7:50 10:30
7 CONSTANTINE
10:35 1:05 3:35 6:05 8:20 10:30
8 BUNSHINSABA *(OUIJA BOARD)*
10:50 12:50 2:50 4:50 6:50 8:50 10:30

NOVALICHES

935-3229/31

1 CONSTANTINE
11:50 2:40 5:30 8:25
2 HITCH
11:00 1:30 4:00 6:30 8:55
3 FOOTSTEPS
11:00 1:00 3:00 5:00 7:00 8:55
4 SON OF THE MASK 2
11:00 1:20 3:40 6:00 8:25
5 RAY
11:00 1:30 4:00 6:30 8:55
6 SIDEWAYS
11:00 1:30 4:00 6:30 8:55
7 RESERVE
8 RESERVE

PIONEER

687-5378

1 HITCH
2 CONSTANTINE
3 A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS
4 MILLION DOLLAR BABY

CITISQUARE MALABON

288-2575

1 SHALL WE DANCE
2 CONSTANTINE
3 INFECTION
4 NIGHT JOB

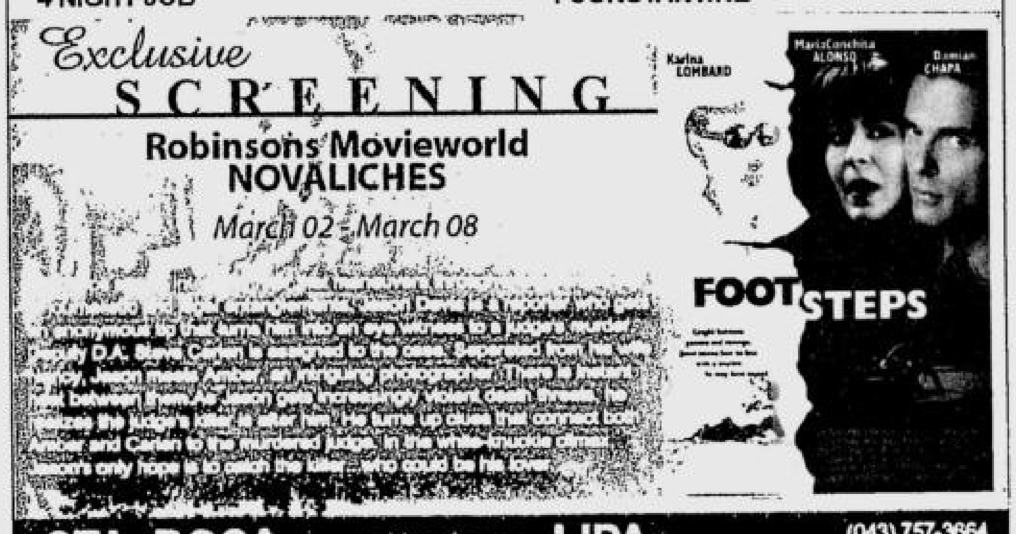
CAINTA

240-4661

1 HITCH
2 SIDEWAYS
3 SON OF THE MASK 2
4 CONSTANTINE

Exclusive
SCREENING

Robinsons Movieworld NOVALICHES
March 02 - March 08



STA. ROSA

(049) 837-0907

1 CONSTANTINE
2 INFECTION
3 SAKSI DRIVER
4 A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS
5 LET THE LOVE BEGIN

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1 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
2 RACING STRIPES
3 CONSTANTINE
4 HELLWOLF
5 ASSAULT ON PRECINT 13

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2 NIGHT JOB
3 CONSTANTINE
4 PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
5 RACING STRIPES

ANGELES

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1 HITCH
2 INFECTION
3 CONSTANTINE
4 A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS

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4 CONSTANTINE
5 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
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5 HITCH
6 CONSTANTINE

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3 ASSAULT ON PRECINT 13
4 SIDEWAYS
5 FLIGHT OF THE PHOENIX
6 SHALL WE DANCE

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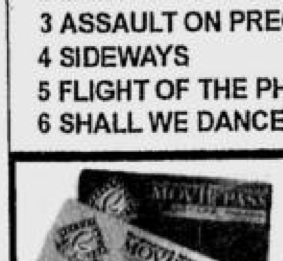
2 A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS
3 PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
4 ASSAULT ON PRECINT 13
5 LET THE LOVE BEGIN
6 CONSTANTINE



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COGIE Domingo

Did
Doming
girl pre

JUST ASKING: Could it be tr
the daughter of Pepe Smith p
knowledge it? Of course, any
that celebrity is the father of
denial kings.

Aside from a paternity tes
polygraph test as well? Ah, th
who got laid in show biz!

How will Jeremy Marquez
his wife for alleged
abandonment and
non-support of their
children?

The case is ongoing.
His mistress is said to
be a talk show host
just like himself. How
long will their respective
shows stay mum
about the issue? Maybe dad J
advice. Tsong's experience wi
endary!

Do
W
Doll
Car

Wonder how viewers of th
when they find out the host
Queen" by her staff.

Why the strange monicker
funny habit of sprinkling mine
she goes on cam. She wants to
been sweating profusely so i
been on the field all day.

And I thought only actors
tears. Now even perspiration

GMA-7 reacts

In my previous column, I w
Begin" issue, the bone of con
contracts (for movies) of lead
Gutierrez, Jennylyn Mercado
Films.

I also mentioned that Mot
during the movie's promo and
let things slide.

As my source said, "The po
whether they (GMA-7) have
or not. The issue is, they faile
their plans which is a big respo

That's why Mother and h
slighted.

GMA-7 sent me their side o
ing it here. Oh well ... let the
the issue end:

Hi Dolly Ann!

I read your column on Ma
office records – and rules of
and Regal people were surp
there is bad blood between the

Mother Lily was involved
with GMA Films in coming up
love Begin." It is a little-know
tributed through Regal Film
openly acknowledge the fact
invaluable help, "Let The Lo
been the hit that it was. GMA
ruin such a successful partn
record straight.

Best Regards,
Jayce C. Perlas
Head, Program Publicity (
GMA Network, Inc.

Healthline

Catch "Healthline" on Sun
on ABC 5.Hosted by forme
Choa, the show features the
swer the ordinary Filipinos' q

The show has been reforma
interesting segments by Batc
produces the show. For sho
needs, call 726-3776 local 12

(For feedback, email
hoo.com or dollyanne@truef

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Award for Inquirer's LA correspondent

JANET Susan Rodriguez-Nepales, Inquirer Entertainment's correspondent in Los Angeles, was recently cited by Celebrity Chronicle in its annual recognition of outstanding Filipino-Americans.

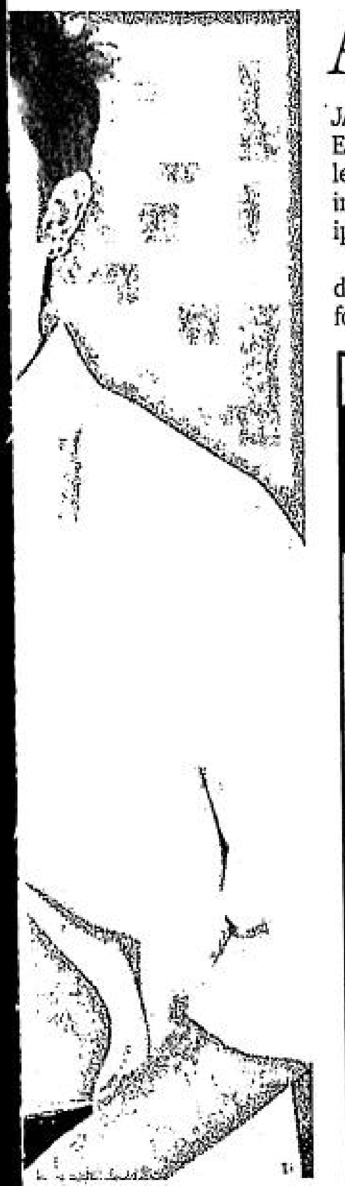
The awards were given during rites at the auditorium of the Central Library in Glendale, California.

Nepales was cited for achievements in journalism. She received a plaque from visiting filmmaker Elwood Perez, who was one of the presenters in the event titled "Celebration 2005."

Celebrity Chronicle is published and edited by Tony Vizmonte.

Nepales has profiled Hollywood celebrities for the Inquirer, among them Tom Cruise, Julia Roberts, Jodie Foster, Glenn Close, Julie Andrews, Halle Berry, Cameron Diaz, Lindsay Lohan, Drew Barrymore, Kirsten Dunst and Kate Hudson.

She writes a column, "Dateline: Hollywood," for Philippine News, one of the leading Filipino-American newspapers. She is married to journalist Ruben Nepales.



ogie
go get a
gnant?

ie that Cogie Domingo got
regnant but refused to ac-
girl can claim that this or
ier baby as most actors are

, maybe he should take a
lies about who's lying and

handle the charges filed by

OLLY
OOD

y Ann
vajal

oey can give Jeremy sound
h women is said to be leg-

s news program will react
is called "*Wisik* (Sprinkle)

Because the host has this
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make it appear that she has
would seem like she had

sed eye drops to stimulate
an be faked on TV!

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stars Angel Locsin, Richard
ind Mark Herras with Regal

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that it was in her nature to

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the story and I am reprint-
explanations begin and let

ch 1, 2005, "Breaking box-
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with the smash-hit "Let The
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. Also, GMA Films people
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ve Begin" would not have
Films would do nothing to
ership. Hope this sets the

itertainment)

ays 11:30 a.m. to 12 noon
IBC-13 newscaster Grace
est doctors who try to an-
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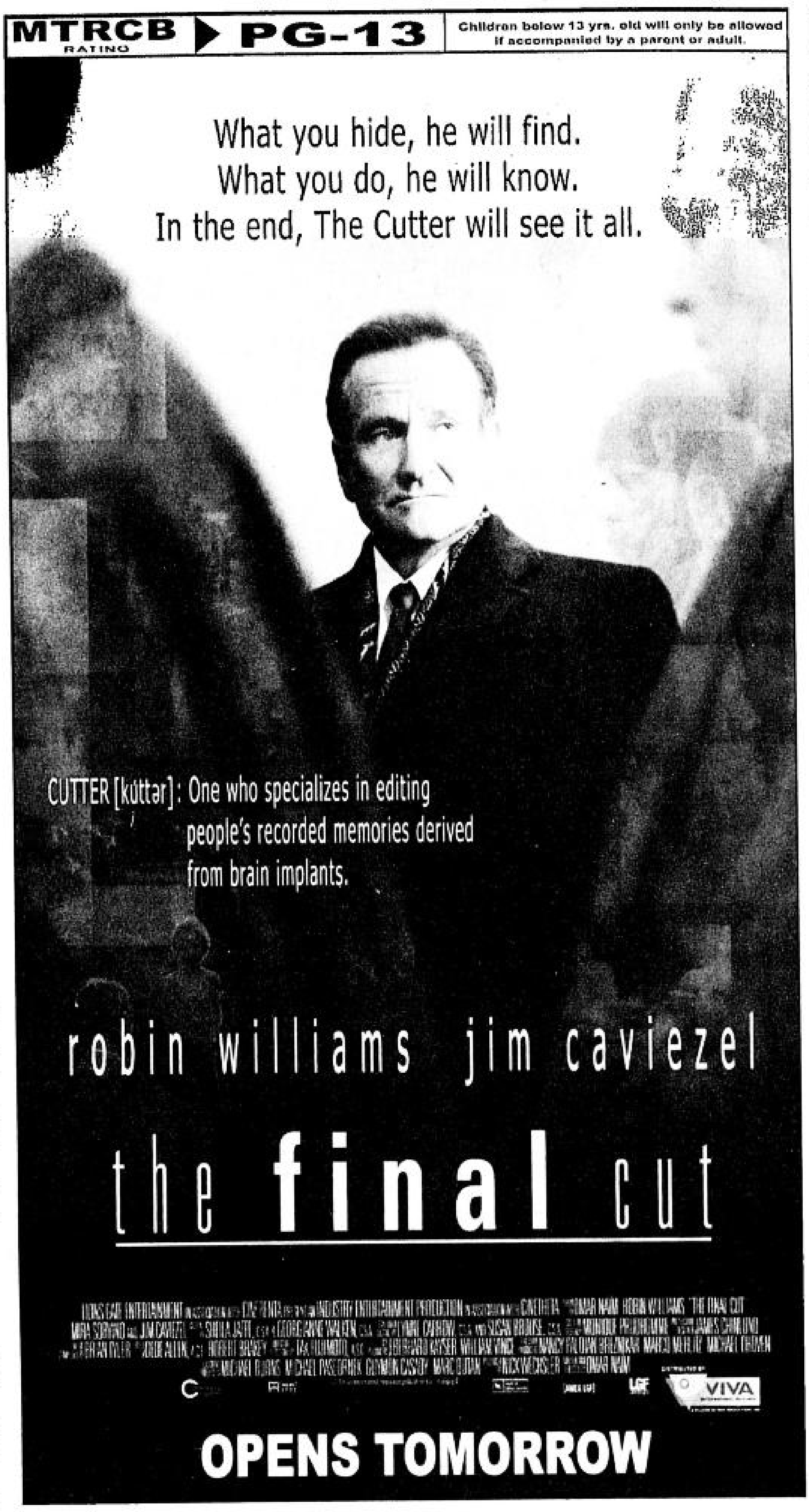
ve Productions, which line-
oting and post-production
31 or 0920-9239545.
vateringholeshangrila@ya-
ithband.com)



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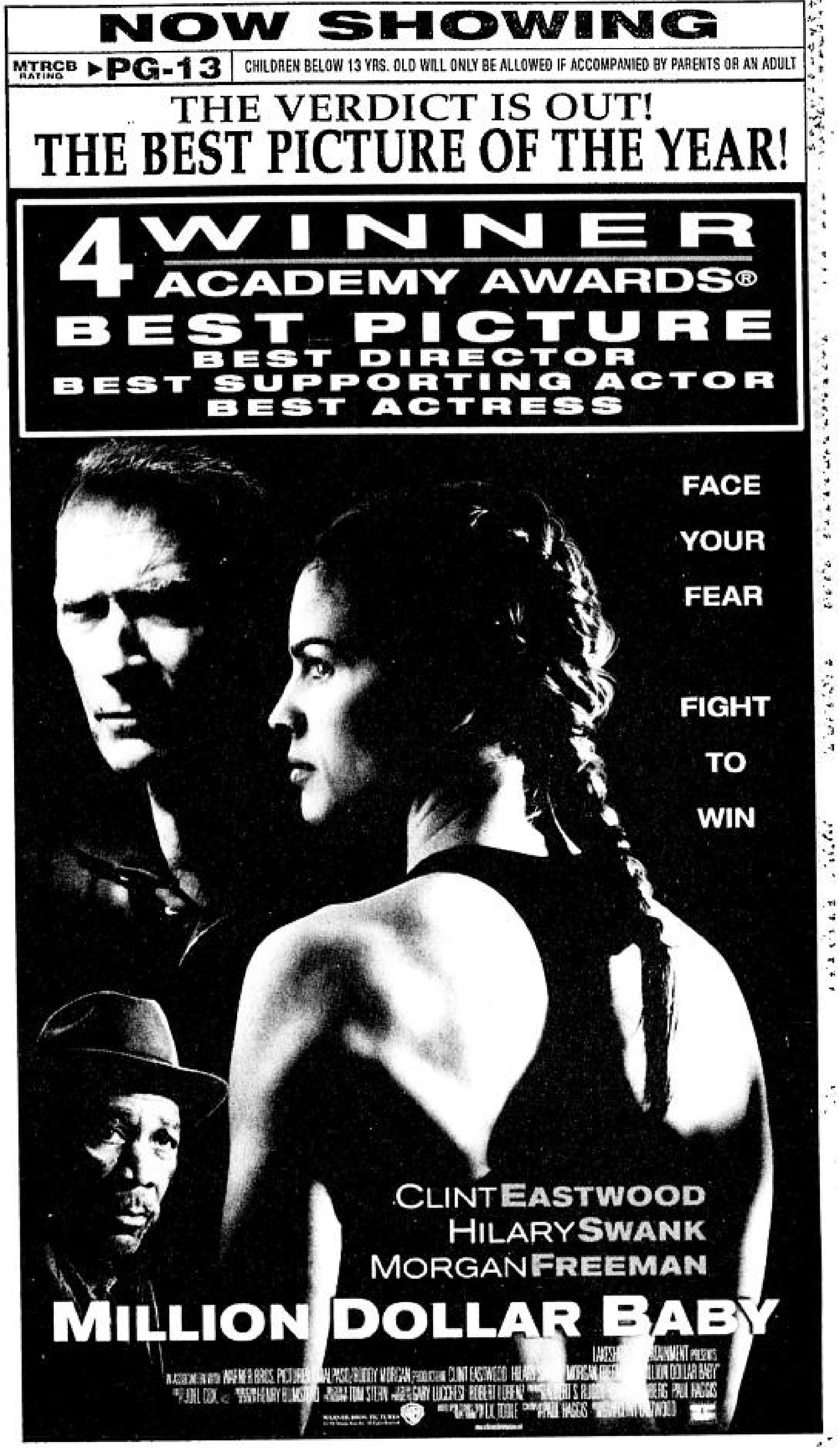
What you hide, he will find.
What you do, he will know.
In the end, The Cutter will see it all.

CUTTER [kʊttər]: One who specializes in editing people's recorded memories derived from brain implants.

robin williams jim caviezel

the final cut

OPENS TOMORROW



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MORGAN FREEMAN

MILLION DOLLAR BABY

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OPENS TOMORROW

a CINE SUERTE FILMS presentation of a BEN M7 YALUNG Film

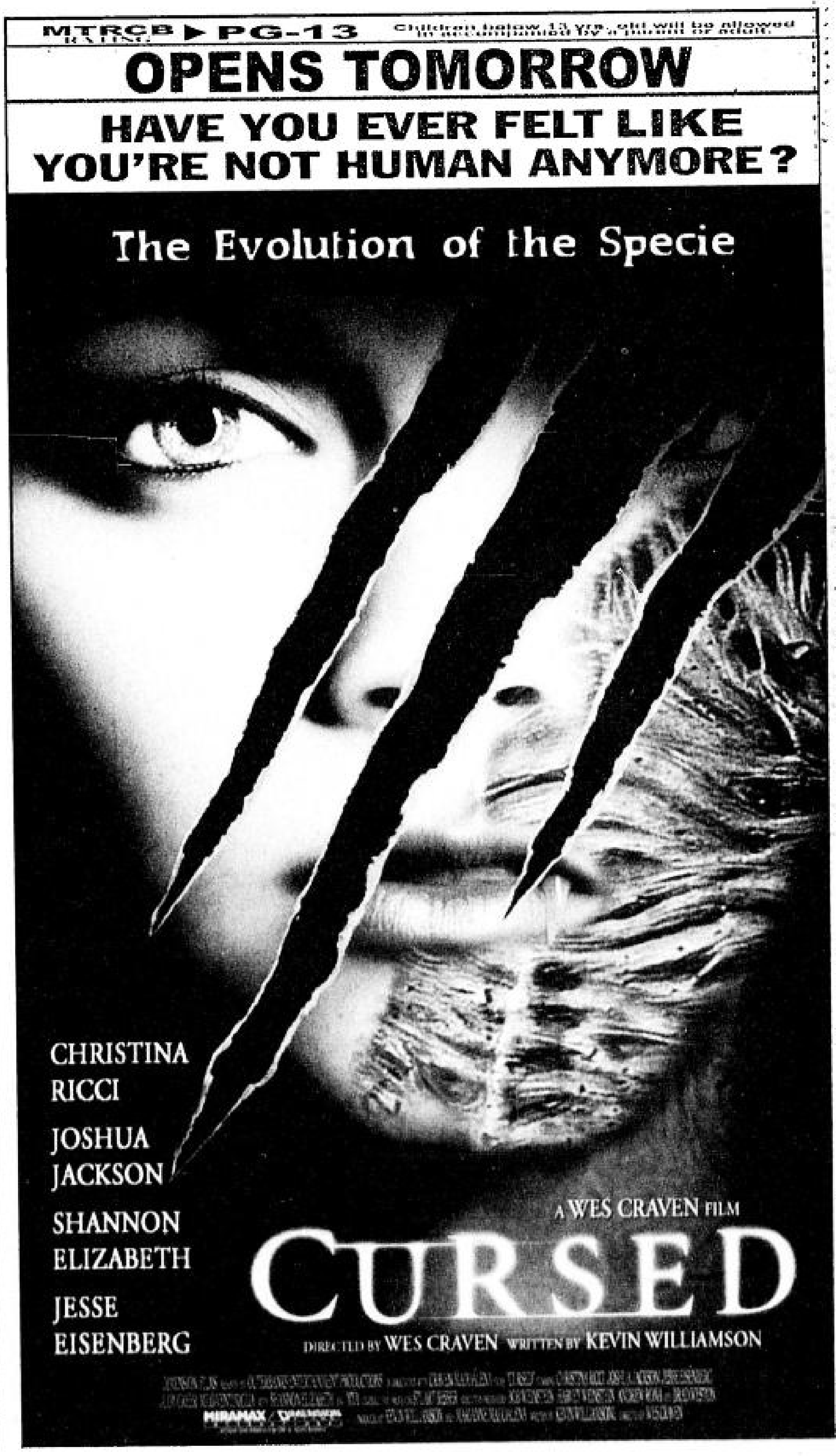
EDDIE GARCIA JOYCE JIMENEZ ALBERT MARTINEZ
CHERRY PIE PICACHE JEAN GARCIA BIANCA KING PAOLO PARAISO ELLA GUEVARA
MATTHEW HUNT as JESUS CHRIST INA FELEO as the BLESSED VIRGIN

JODI SANTAMARIA MARCO ALCARAZ

Birhen ng MANAOAG
a film by BEN YALUNG

ALICIA ALONZO NYDEL MERCADO TONY MABESA DINKY DOO

SMART JAG Bioessence skin • slimming • spa center



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OPENS TOMORROW
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CHRISTINA RICCI
JOSHUA JACKSON
SHANNON ELIZABETH
JESSE EISENBERG

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CURSED
DIRECTED BY WES CRAVEN WRITTEN BY KEVIN WILLIAMSON

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ENTERTAINMENT

Scandal-free TV an impossibility?

It's hard to argue with ratings, talent managers found out in meetings with network execs

By Bayani San Diego

"IT'S AN uphill climb," said Norma Japitana, talent manager and member of the Professional Artist Managers, Inc. (Pami), referring to her group's goal of a "ceasefire" on the war of scandals perpetrated by TV talk shows.

"It's hard to argue with success," Japitana added. "This problem should be seen in the context of the fierce competition between two networks."

On March 3, a week after meeting with ABS-CBN executives, 18 Pami members sat down with 14 officers and producers of GMA-7.

Topping the agenda of both meetings was the proliferation of below-the-belt gossip on TV talk shows. Apparently, the two meetings merely made it clearer to Pami members that putting a lid on controversies is next to impossible—especially since the shows concerned consistently land on top of the ratings charts.

"And it's still all about ratings," Japitana pointed out.

In the meantime, the entertainment industry — and the public — will just have to suffer the consequences, among them displaced priorities, plummeting quality of shows, and low morale.

After the meeting with ABS-CBN, Pami members saw reason to hope for positive changes. They said the network executives, led by EVP and Entertainment head Charo Santos-Concio, "recognized the need to move to higher ground and elevate the standards of entertainment reportage."

Another Pami member, Leo Dominguez, lauded the network for "openness and receptiveness."

"The February 21 meeting was very productive," read the official statement from ABS-CBN's corporate communications office. "Both parties agreed to institute some reforms that will be mutually beneficial to both groups. Both ABS-CBN and Pami have agreed to keep details of their discussion confidential."

However, the network officials said the entire industry should "act as one." Meaning, ABS-CBN would agree to a moratorium on scandals only if the other stations—specifically its top rival, GMA-7—did the same.

Case study

In the March 3 meeting, GMA-7 officers headed by vice-president for Entertainment Wilma Galvante assured Pami members that the station routinely exhausted all precautions before airing any story.

"They told us that each potential subject goes through multi-level decision-making and passes through proper legal channels," said Arnold Vegafria, another Pami member.

GMA-7 gave a multi-media presentation that focused on "Star Talk's" controversial exposé on the alleged live-in relationship over a decade ago between the now-married Aga Muhlach and former starlet Olivia Ortiz.

"It was discussed as a case study," Japitana said.

Pami members pointed out that the Aga-Olivia bombshell was not a "current" event, so why was it dug up? The GMA-7 officials retorted: "A story is a story, and it deserves to be told."

Rules of engagement

Thus, the mood among Pami members after the meeting with GMA-7, although upbeat, was tinged with pragmatism.

"There were no major or concrete promises made, but I would still consider it a success," Pami member Girlie Rodis said. "Issues were presented and both sides were heard. Reminders on rules of engagement were reviewed and agreed upon."

Rules of engagement? Will the war of scandals further escalate? Is the very notion of a "ceasefire" ridiculous?

At the moment, the only probable result of the Pami campaign is that TV networks will start laying out the scandal sheets on their homegrown talents, who are less likely to complain, or on artists handled by non-Pami affiliated managers.

In the meantime, televiewers can still pretty much expect a barrage of controversies on a daily basis.

"Ironically," observed Japitana, "show biz talk shows continue to increase in number."

GMA7 is reportedly launching another one soon.

Vigilance

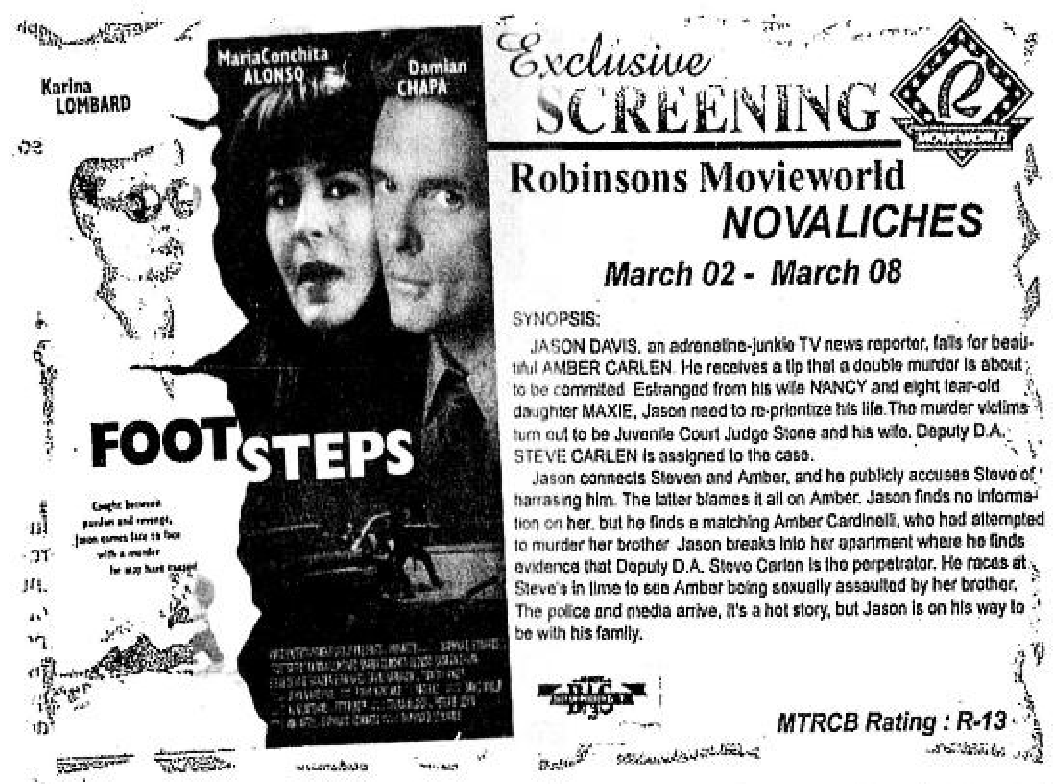
"Surely, our work doesn't end with these meetings," Pami member Ed Instrella said. "We should stay vigilant."

"This is just the beginning," Japitana agreed. "We should make appropriate noise."

She asked televiewers to be more discriminating, to use their power to "switch channels or turn off the television set altogether," when they feel offended by something that goes on air.

She also appealed to other sectors — "church and family groups, NGOs, advertisers, and the government" — to remain unwavering in this crusade to keep television safe for children.

"It will take some time," Japitana said. "And we need all the help we can get."



Exclusive SCREENING

Robinsons Movieworld NOVALICHES

March 02 - March 08

SYNOPSIS:

JASON DAVIS, an adrenaline-junkie TV news reporter, falls for beautiful AMBER CARLEN. He receives a tip that a double murder is about to be commited. Estranged from his wife NANCY and eight lear-old daughter MAXIE, Jason need to re-priontize his life. The murder victims turn out to be Juvenile Court Judge Stone and his wife. Deputy D.A. STEVE CARLEN is assigned to the case.

Jason connects Steven and Amber, and he publicly accuses Steve of harrasing him. The latter blames it all on Amber. Jason finds no information on her, but he finds a matching Amber Cardinelli, who had attempted to murder her brother. Jason breaks into her apartment where he finds evidence that Deputy D.A. Steve Carlon is the perpetrator. He races at Steve's in time to see Amber being sexually assaulted by her brother. The police and media arrive, it's a hot story, but Jason is on his way to be with his family.

MTRCB Rating : R-13

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SON OF THE MASK
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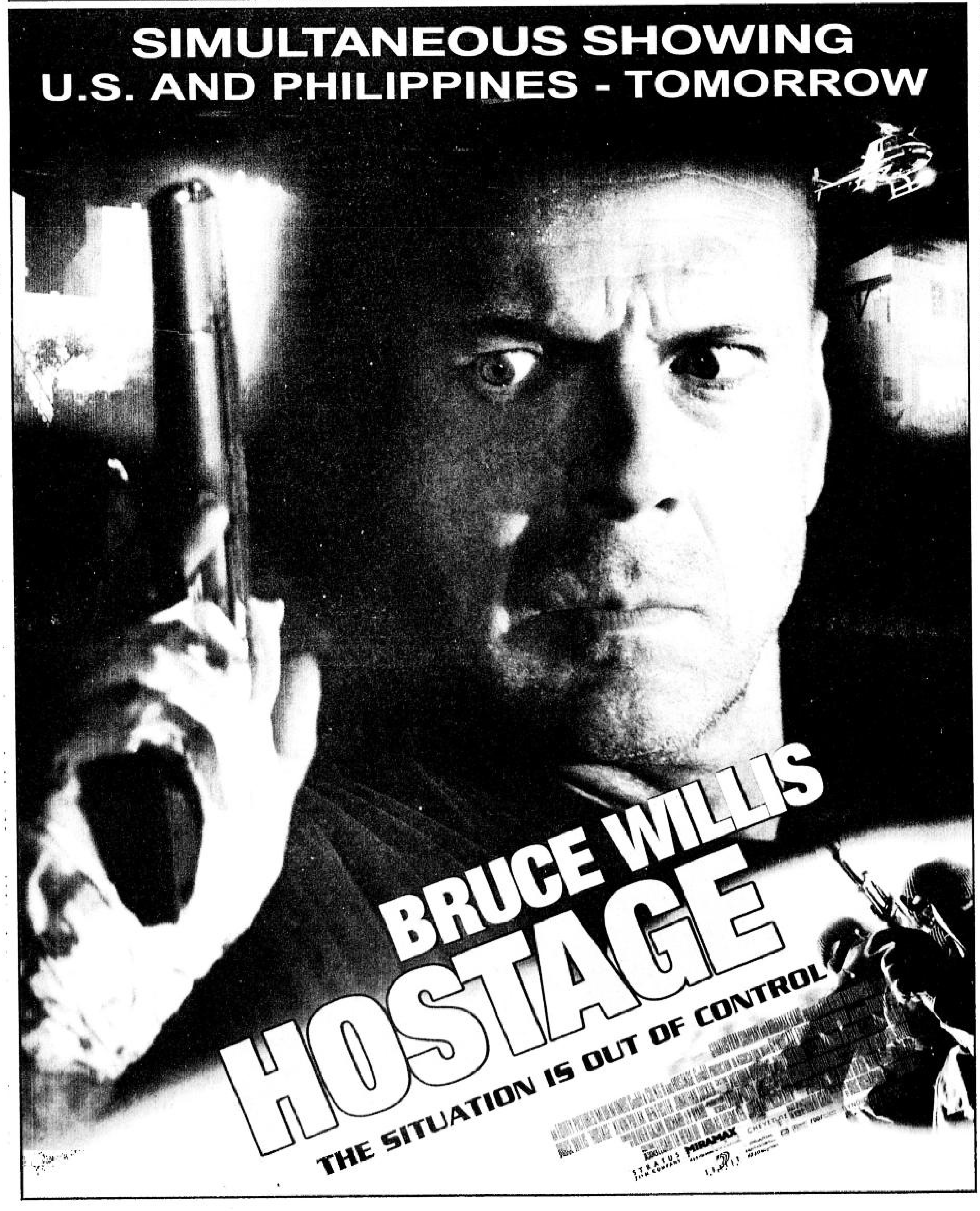

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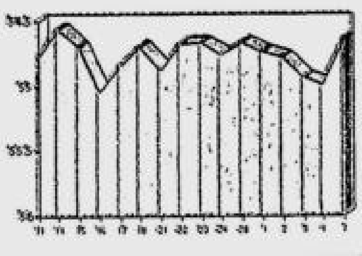

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As of 5 p.m., March 7, 2005

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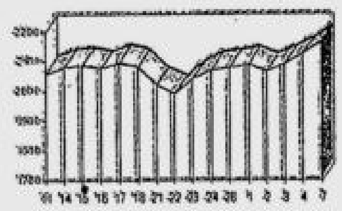
Stocks up 1.95%

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



SHARE prices yesterday closed 1.95 percent higher, extending sharp gains for a third consecutive session on aggressive follow-through buying of stocks with good earnings prospects, dealers said.

The market is already technically overbought but further upside is possible given that the next major resistance level lies at 2,200 points, they said.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index put on 41.41 points at 2,166.10, a fresh five-year high after trading between 2,124.69 and 2,171.45.

The broader all-shares index rose 28.97 points to 1,223.64.

Gainers beat losers 85 to 25, with 43 stocks unchanged.

Volume was 2.45 billion shares worth P2.8 billion after Friday's 3.27 billion shares worth P1.41 billion.

"The main index moving by leaps and bounds is making investors more optimistic about Philippine companies," said James Lago of Westlink Globe Equities Inc.

Investors are also shifting to equities from government securities as inflation rises while domestic interest rates remain largely steady, he added.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT) ended up P25 at P1,490 on sustained interest after announcing early last week a record P28-billion net profit for 2004. *AFP*

By Michelle V. Remo

THE GOVERNMENT'S budget deficit in January hit P16.5 billion, slightly higher than the year-ago's P16.12 billion but was well within the target for the month and the first quarter ceiling of P77.8 billion.

The January deficit was 21 percent lower than the P25-billion target for the month (computed based on the P77.8-billion ceiling for the first quarter).

"We seem to be off to a good start this year. The numbers are encouraging and I hope this trend continues throughout the year," Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima said in a statement. He credited strong revenue collections, especially by the Bureau of Internal Revenue, for the encouraging fiscal picture in the first month of the year.

The finance chief said the strong tax collection performance of the BIR early in the year was partly due to the implementation of new laws, including the increase in the excise taxes on cigarettes and alcohol, and the Lateral Attrition covering revenue collecting agencies. He also noted adjustments in the tax administration by the BIR, which has been improving its technology for tax auditing.

The BIR, which accounted for two-thirds of the national government's tax revenues, collected P42 billion during the month, which was 15 percent better than its target of P40.8 billion.

The Bureau of Customs collected P10.6 billion during the month.

Combined with those collected by other agencies, the government's total revenue collection in January reached P64.3 billion, up 21.1 percent from year-ago level.

Purisima said the Department of Finance was hoping Congress would soon pass the bills seeking an increase in the value-added tax rate from 10 to 12 percent and the expansion of the VAT coverage to include more products and services. The twin VAT proposals are expected to generate P60 billion in additional revenue for the government yearly.

Government expenditures reached P80.8 billion, representing a 15-percent year-on-year growth. The DOF explained that the increase was due mainly to the P8.1 billion in additional worth of interest payments for bond issuances in 2004. Another P6.1 billion was due to payments of checks issued in late 2004 for capital outlays and personal services, as the government pursued more infrastructure projects toward the end of 2004.

RP maritime hub goes full steam ahead

By Joan Orendain
Contributor

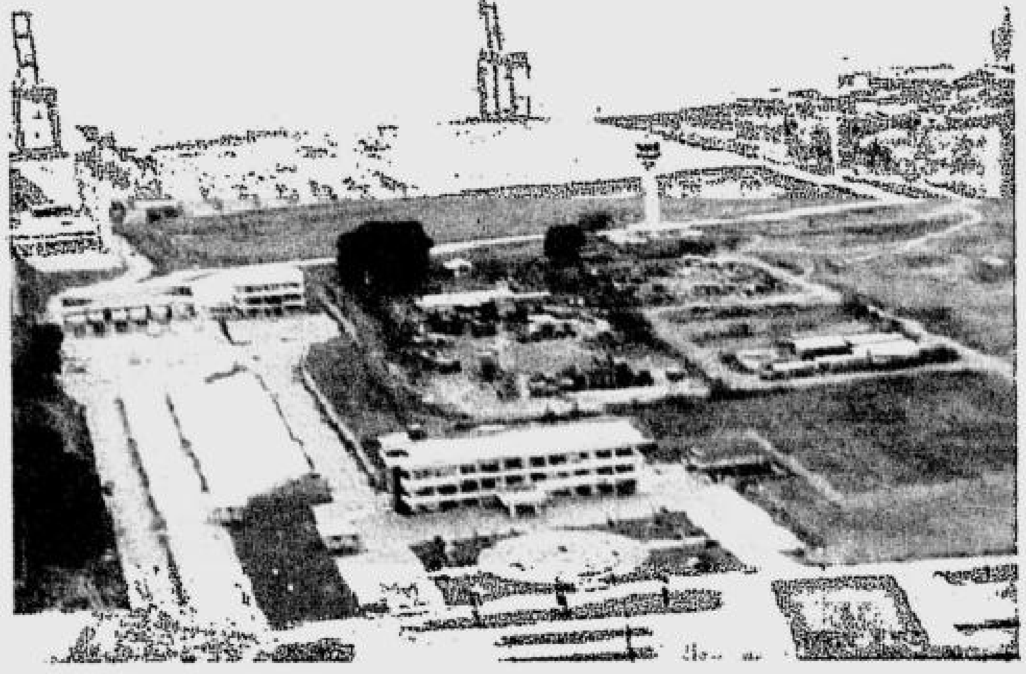
(Conclusion)

SPECIAL REPORT

THE MARITIME Industrial Park is where investors would be invited to locate their shipbuilding yards. The MIP covers 100 hectares of shoreline property located within the 3,000-hectare Phividec Industrial Estate in Tagaloan, Misamis Oriental. It will be developed to serve as the maritime services hub for the region.

The hub will house a shipbuilding facility with the latest modular technology for shipbuilding, conversion and repair. Ancillary facilities, including metal fabrication, foundry, shops for navigational and electrical works, machine and engineering shops, spare parts/machinery shops, will also be located in the hub. The physical integration would become a one-stop-shop arrangement fostering

RP/B4



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Smart ups ante, launches cut-rate call plan

By Clarissa S. Batino

THE PRICE war is heating up.

Smart Communications Inc. and Pilipino Telephone Corp. are out "to rock the market" by launching their own unlimited plan, similar to the P10 "telebabad" campaign of the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co.

Smart and its subsidiary hope to launch the promo within the week.

PLDT currently is charging only P10 for each call within its network of more than 2 million fixed-line customers, and more than 19 million wireless subscribers.

Rogelio Quevedo, Smart's legal officer, said the company would start the promo for all its wireless brands once fierce competitor Globe Telecom Inc. launches its own buffet voice and text promo tentatively set today.

Globe, through its Touch Mobile brand, will offer an unlimited within-network call rate of P300 for 30 days, and unlimited text rate of P50 for 5 days on top of existing subscription plans.

Touch Mobile has an estimated 1.7 million subscribers.

Globe said those who would not take advantage of the buffet price might still enjoy the P1 per minute call rate starting the third minute of call within the network.

"Within 2 to 3 days after Globe or Touch Mobile launches, Smart and Piltel will respond in our own unique, smart and innovative way," Quevedo said. "We will offer something that will really rock the market."

Smart currently charges P6.50 per minute for calls within the network. Piltel's Talk 'N Text offers a lower rate of P5.50 per minute. Calls outside the network are charged P7.50 per minute.

Quevedo said Globe merely copied Sun Cellular's 24/7 unlimited plan. The Gokongwei firm since October has been selling a buffet call and text plan of P250 for 30 days and P100 for 10 days.

Globe, according to Quevedo, has no originality, and its subscribers should consider shifting to Smart.

"We just want to protect our market share," Quevedo explained. "Globe and Touch Mobile is our competitor. We did not respond to Sun Cellular because it is very small. Our promo is similar to PLDT's *telebabad* rate."

According to the Smart official, PLDT's "*telebabad*" rate applies to PLDT-to-PLDT calls, as well as PLDT-to-Smart or PLDT-to-Talk 'N Text calls.

"What Smart and Piltel would do is similar," Quevedo added. "It will be offered within the group and to all the brands, whether Smart Gold, Addict, Infinity or TNT."

Smart and Piltel ended 2004 with 19.2 million subscribers.

"There is a market segment developing," Manuel Pangilinan, PLDT chair, said last week. "If that is what the market wants, then Smart will participate in that. We would tap into this new voice market of unlimited pricing."

Pangilinan said PLDT's wireless units experienced the highest subscriber take-up during the fourth quarter of 2004, even when Sun Cellular's 24/7 plan was already out in the market. This, he said, proved that PLDT was hardly affected by Sun's unlimited campaign.

The need to protect vital market share will become more pronounced this year as Pangilinan forecasts a slowdown in mobile subscriber take-up for the whole industry.

It appears though, that the projected slowdown, has yet to affect PLDT. Its top official said that, based on January results, subscriber take-up and revenue were ahead compared to January 2004.

Pangilinan said Sun Cellular must be complemented for having developed a new product that was keeping competitors awake at night. He added though that he was not among those losing sleep.

Sun asks NTC to change service standards for telcos

SUN CELLULAR has asked the National Telecommunications Commission to amend its performance standards for mobile phone operations in line with increased competition in the industry.

This developed after Globe Telecom Inc. yesterday said that based on a test it had conducted, the Gokongwei mobile phone firm had been failing the performance benchmarks set by the NTC.

According to the Globe test, 35.4 of 100 Sun Cellular calls made over 14 hours failed to connect, and 5.09 of 100 calls were terminated or dropped by the Sun network. Service further deteriorated from 8 to 9 p.m., when as many as nine out of 10 calls did not connect successfully, and the rate of drop calls rose to 14.29 of 100 calls.

These figures exceed the benchmarks set by the NTC in a circular in 2002, which provided that only a maximum of seven out of 100 connection attempts should fail on the first try, while no more than five of 100 calls should be dropped or terminated by the network.

"The NTC should revisit the circular because a new product has evolved and competition in the industry has changed. We are not against imposing standards because that is good for the consumers. What we are asking is that a different standard be set depending on what we charge consumers," William Pamintuan, senior vice president of Digital Telecommunications Phils. Inc., said in an interview.

Sun Cellular is the trade name of Digitel Mobile Phils. Inc., a unit of Digitel. It sells unlimited voice and text plans for P250 for a month and P100 for 10 days.

The unlimited plan boosted Sun Cellular's subscriber base to 1.5 million as of January from only 700,000 as of end-September 2004.

However, competitors alleged that because of the low price, Sun Cellular had congested its young network, thus, service failed to keep up with sales.

Froilan Castelo, assistant vice president of Globe, on the other hand, said that the NTC should not bend the rules to suit one player.

"It is the players that have to adjust, not the regulator," said Castelo.

Pamintuan, meanwhile, said that Digitel was merely asking for some breathing room as it expands its network.

It said that the bigger networks likewise went through some growing pains before service standards were met.

Pilipino Telephone Corp. earlier said the NTC should penalize Sun Cellular for cutting calls covered by its unlimited plan after 15 minutes, and successfully connecting only 38 out of 100 calls on the first attempt.

The Digitel official admitted that Sun Cellular was forced to terminate 24/7 calls after 15-30 minutes after it observed that some unscrupulous subscribers had been abusing the unlimited plan.

Pamintuan said Digitel caught some subscribers using the line non-stop for 16 hours, thus, the decision to impose a cut-off time for all calls. *Clarissa S. Batino*

Facing a blink wall

BREAKTIME

Conrado R. Banal III

IT'S ALMOST summer again, and I think we better get rid of the VAT issue on electricity before our lawmakers take their mandatory trips abroad.

That's none other than the "value added tax," now at 10 percent, and which the House of Representatives is raising to 12 percent.

In an obvious attempt to please this bankrupt cute administration, not only did the House raise the VAT, it removed the exemption on sensitive items like electricity.

In reaction to the House measure, electronics companies are threatening to leave this country. They want to move elsewhere, most probably—where else—to China.

Now, the VAT measure is already in the Senate, and some lawmakers are not seriously taking the threat of the electronics sector. It's just a threat, right?

In other words, even if it is facing a blank wall on the various tax measures Malacañang has requested, Congress will not blink on the VAT on power generation.

After all, with only 11 to 12 million jobless, this country is just risking the loss of jobs of some 400,000 workers in the electronics industry.

Those workers support roughly two million people. You have that many people whose lives are threatened by the VAT on power.

What's that to our dearly beloved legislators? They can still fly out of the country to avoid the summer heat in aid of legislation.

* * *

BASED on reports, the Federation of Philippine Industries supports the VAT increase from 10 to 12 percent.

But as FPI founder Raul Concepcion noted, we also better do something about the VAT leaks. You know, all that cheating!

If we don't, the VAT increase will only give undue advantage to the tax cheats and—hear this, Bureau of Customs—the smugglers.

You see, the honest businessman must naturally raise his prices to pay for the higher VAT.

Since the smugglers and tax cheats do not pay any VAT at all, they will undercut the legitimate businesses. Who do you think can sell more?

* * *

AS FOR THE electronics industry, the few manufacturing firms still left in this cost-challenged country feel that they have to bear the brunt of the 12-percent VAT on electricity, according to the Semiconductors and Electronics Industries of the Philippines, or the Seipi.

Like most business sectors, Seipi actually supports the VAT measure in Congress. It only takes exception to what it calls "sensitive" items, like electricity generation.

By the way, all the foreign chambers—American, European, Australia-New Zealand, Canadian, Japanese, Korean—are also against the VAT on power generation.

But it turned out that the electronics industry is the biggest user of electricity in the country today. Well, it is probably in a neck-and-neck race with the malls!

Anyway, based on Seipi estimates, the VAT will raise the cost of electricity by at least 22 percent. This, to its members, is close to being castrated.

* * *

BUT EVEN before it comes to that—before losing their manhood—the electronics firms will have to close shop, because they do not intend to lose their shirts.

The sector thinks that the 12-percent VAT on power will no longer make the local electronics industry competitive worldwide.

The big increase in energy cost, of course, will force the electronics firms to raise what they charge their customers abroad.

Since those customers can always get from China the same products for the same price, or even for a lower price, the locals will likely see a lot of contract cancellation.

And if electronics firms decide to relocate to places like Vietnam, the move will definitely result in a big loss for the country.

Last year alone, the industry's exports reached almost $27 billion. This accounts for roughly two-thirds of all our exports, mind you!

That's why, thanks to the electronics sector, our total exports rose by 9 percent. It was the only sector that posted huge growth in exports last year.

I mean, come on, without the electronics sector, where does Congress think our export growth will come from? Oh no, not again, not from our poor D-H!

* * *

COMPUTER hackers, according to the website of hackers worldwide where they boast of their exploits, just got into the computer system of ... well, the Philippine Congress.

Can you believe that? All those sensitive information in Congress are not safe from computer hackers.

Well, according to word in the IT business, Congress uses the so-called open source for its computer operating system.

That is the supposedly "free" OS called Linux, as against, for instance, Microsoft Windows or the MAC OS.

It is not exactly "free," by the way, because as a lot of government offices in Europe found out, you actually have to spend more to shift from, say, Windows to the open source system, than staying with Windows in the first place.

Anyway, even famous fans of the open system already admitted, although reluctantly, that Microsoft is more secure than Linux. Again, those are fans, okay?

* * *

FOR THE information of our dear Congress, Linux enthusiasts admitted as much in a big IT conference in San Francisco only recently.

They were Dr. Richard Ford, a professor from the Florida Institute of Technology, and Dr. Herbert Thompson, an executive of Security Innovation, a computer security firm.

The two analyzed the vulnerabilities of computer systems, and they were forced to conclude that Windows was more secure than Linux. See what I mean, my dear Congress?

Ford said "vulnerability counts are much higher with Red Hat [Linux] than with Microsoft."

Meaning, of course, your secrets are safer from your spouse if you use the latter operating system.

Yet Ford admitted that he is a Linux fan. "The first time I saw the statistics, I thought someone had mucked about with my database," he said.

Conclusion: Many attacks are aimed at Linux than at Windows.

* * *

SOME people were of course skeptical of the study. The two academics nevertheless called on the skeptics to replicate the study, welcoming others to look for flaws.

They said they did not have enough funds to test other systems, such as the Apple OSX, but they said that it was amazingly stable.

But what has their study got to do with the price of eggs in China, or even electronic products in Vietnam?

Well, this and future studies will eventually lead to a website that can help system administrators weigh up the security risks before they put money in computer systems.

Obviously, Congress did not do that. Its system was hacked. And these are the guys who decide our future!

Cash register makers told to accredit machines

By Michelle V. Remo

THE BUREAU of Internal Revenue has called on all manufacturers of cash register and point-of-sales machines to have their equipment accredited by the revenue agency first before selling the units to businesses.

The move will enable businesses, especially newly formed ones, to carry on with their operations without having to wait for the BIR's stamp of approval on the machines.

According to revenue officials, a business establishment now only has to go to the BIR's website to determine which models of cash register or point-of sales machines have already been accredited.

As long as the model of the cash register or point-of-sales machines they buy from a manufacturer is accredited, the businessmen can proceed with their operations using the machines.

The BIR's new accreditation strategy is meant to solve the long queue of applications for machine accreditation, and the delays in securing BIR's approval, which have hampered businesses operations, according to BIR Commissioner Guillermo Parayno Jr.

He explained that prior to this new accreditation strategy, each business firm had to go through the long process of accrediting each cash register or point-of-sales machine with the BIR.

To facilitate the new accreditation strategy, the BIR yesterday began a week-long trade fair in Quezon City.

At the trade fair, manufacturers of cash registers and point-of-sales machines are invited to have each of the models they sell accredited by the BIR.

The new accreditation strategy, contained in Revenue Regulation No. 111-2004, is in line with the BIR's tax compliance and verification drive, or the so-called "tax mapping" campaign of 2003.

The commissioner said that some of the business establishments they caught reasoned out that they had been operating without duly accredited cash register machines because their application for accreditation had been pending for so long at the BIR.

The BIR will continue to conduct tax mapping operations this year to determine the accuracy of the sales reports of business establishments. The BIR said it is targeting to tax map 350,000 establishments nationwide this year.

Even oil-rich nations in Asia are not spared from oil woes

By Abigail L. Ho

LIKE other countries in the region suffering from a surge in oil prices, the Philippines is not spared, having jacked up local prices twice since the start of the year.

Countries in the Asia-Pacific are seen to spend millions of dollars just to keep their local prices constant.

According to data from the Department of Energy, the Indonesian government had, as of end-2004, spent some $7 billion in subsidies, just so diesel prices would not shoot up, in keeping with the world market trend.

However, with regional and international prices hitting unprecedented levels—soaring to historic highs every single day—the Indonesian government had to hike gasoline and diesel prices by as much as 29 percent.

Roberto Kanapi, general manager for external affairs at oil refiner Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp., said that a recent visit to Indonesia—the only Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) member in Asia—proved how world oil price surges were hitting economies other than the Philippines.

"The high cost of oil in the world market is affecting most countries," he said in a text message from the Indonesian capital Jakarta. "Even here in Indonesia, an oil-exporting country, the government had to increase domestic oil prices by 30 percent last week."

Although it did not shell out as much as Indonesia did, the Malaysian government also had to put in some state subsidy for diesel to prevent prices from shooting up.

As of end-2004, the Malaysian government had already spent around $1.4 billion for diesel subsidies alone.

Despite the subsidies, the Malaysian government still had to jack up prices by 6 percent.

The Thai government, which also subsidized its downstream oil sector, for its part, had already spent some $1.9 billion as of end-2004.

Energy Undersecretary Peter Anthony Abaya earlier admitted that the recent price hikes implemented by the local oil firms were justified, seeing how world prices had spiked considerably over the past weeks.

"It's worth noting that the MOPS (Mean of Platts Singapore)-based diesel alone has surged 31 percent since January," he said. "Local diesel pump price, however, has gone up by only 2.97 percent."

But should prices start to drop, he urged local oil firms to immediately reflect these in local prices through corresponding price reductions.

"For now, let's join the world economy in preparing for this upswing," he said.

Local oil firms recently hiked gasoline, diesel and kerosene prices by 50 centavos a liter to reflect the high costs of crude and refined petroleum products.

Since the beginning of the year, gasoline prices have gone up twice by a total of P1.10 a liter, while diesel prices had increase thrice by a total of P1.30 a liter.

RP, India businessmen want freer trade of medicines

By Ronnel W. Domingo

OFFICIALS of the Philippines-India Business Council yesterday called on the government to allow the importation of medicines outside the "Botika ng Bayan" program, which could lower prices of essential drugs by as much as 75 percent.

The statement was made during a meeting between members of the Philippine Chamber of Commerce of Industry, and delegates from India's Pharmaceutical Export Promotion Council (Pharmexil) and the Basic Chemicals, Pharmaceuticals and Cosmetics Export Promotion Council (Chemexcil).

PCCI president Donald Dee said at the sidelines of the meeting held at the Dusit Hotel in Makati that the groups believed it was high time that imported medicine were allowed in the Philippines outside the current system of importation.

By law, imported medicine must be registered with the Bureau of Food and Drugs. This can be done only through the Philippine International Trading Center.

Dee said it was time for people to stop talking about imported medicine being fake.

"The companies we invited serve 40 percent of the American market," Dee said. "There is no question about the quality of their products. PITC must broaden its distribution system. Cheaper medicines must be made available beyond the 'Botika ng Bayan.'"

In a separate interview, PITC Chair Roberto Pagdanganan said the agency was increasing the number of Botika outlets to 1,500 within the year.

"So far we have about 200 outlets," Pagdanganan said. "We have announced that our target was to have 300 outlets, but we have received a great number of applications for accreditation."

He said he supported the business group's calls, saying the "era of exorbitantly priced medicines should end."

Pagdanganan had said that the cost of medicines commonly bought in the country was five or six times higher than the prices of similar drugs sold in other countries. PITC's Botika ng Bayan program aims to halve the price of commonly bought medicines by 2010.

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Jetro to help RP auto sector

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE JAPAN External Trade Organization has offered to help the government in its efforts to make the local vehicle manufacturing sector more competitive in the region.

According to the Department of Trade and Industry, Jetro was willing to help upgrade the skills of automotive workers, through the Philippine Automotive Industry Skills Certification Systems (PAISCS).

PAISCS seeks to adopt uniform and nationwide certification procedures, which would evaluate the knowledge and skills of workers in the automotive sector.

Trade Secretary Juan B. Santos said the project was designed to establish standards for key skills in automotive and car parts manufacturing, which would result in improved production quality.

Santos explained that the auto industry was constantly upgrading the skills and technical capabilities of workers through various human resource training programs and quality management systems.

The local industry was also working with Jetro for the implementation of its Expert Service Abroad (Jexsa) program.

Under the Jexsa scheme, technical experts from Japan would be tapped to improve the workplace, management systems and production to improve the competitiveness of the sector.

Santos said Japan was sending experts to help in the country's skills certification system.

"This system would not only result in the upgrading of our manpower skills, but it also allow us to easily adapt to new technologies and expand our export market," Santos said.

Skills to be covered under the program include metal stamping, plastic injection molding, iron casting and lathe and milling machine operations.

"These selected skills are identified as priority areas that would complement the national skills certification system," Santos said.

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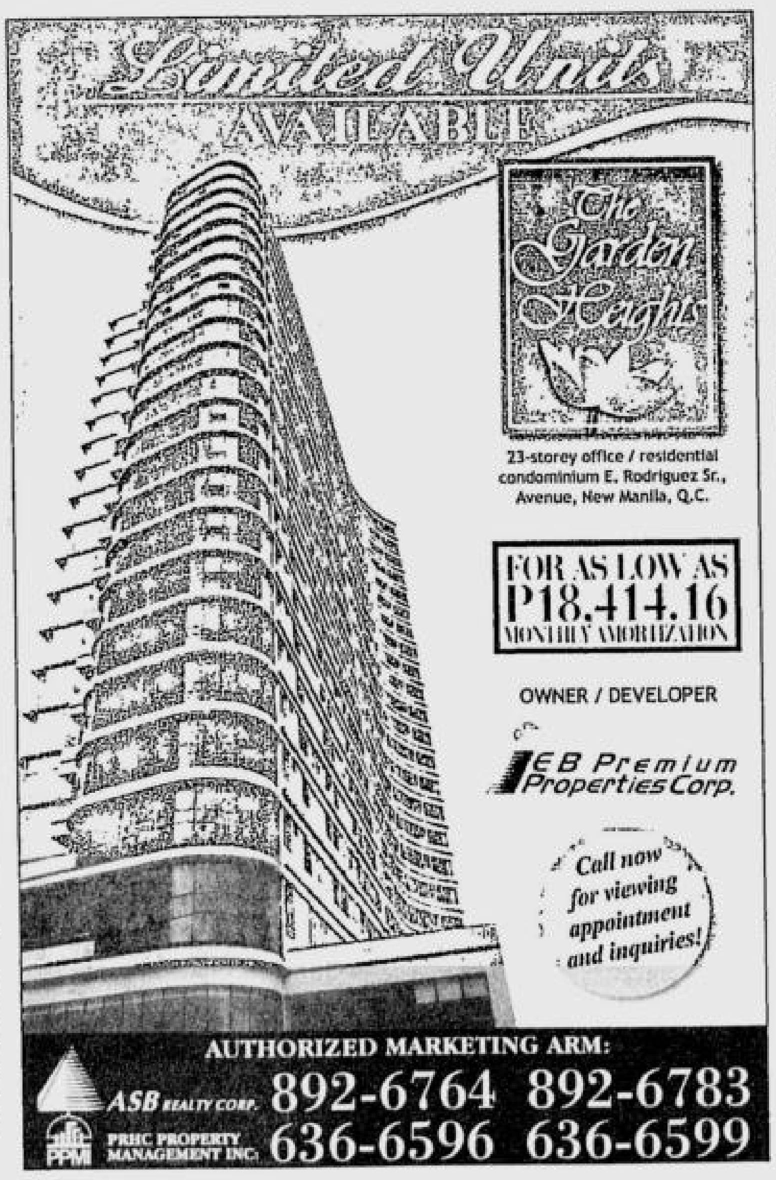
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Tan group wants majority control of Del Monte Pacific

By Doris C. Dumlao and Elizabeth L. Sanchez

TAN PDI PHOTO

THE LUCIO Tan group is looking at taking over the majority control of Singapore-based fruit producer Del Monte Pacific Ltd.

This will entail the acquisition of additional DMPL shares on top of the 40-percent stake that the group had offered to buy.

The group had already put in a bid to buy the 40-percent DMPL stake held by Cirio Finaziara SpA of Italy, the single-biggest block in the company, and is now looking at other sellers.

Salvador Mison, president of Basic Holdings Corp., the vehicle used by the group to bid for the 40-percent stake held by Cirio, said in a recent interview with INQUIRER: "Whenever the Lucio Tan groups buys a company, we want majority control."

He said the 40-percent stake, although the single biggest block in DMPL, was "not enough."

As such, he said the Lucio Tan group would like to negotiate to buy an additional block, such as the Lorenzo family's 22-percent stake.

Mison said there were stumbling blocks, however, as the Lorenzo family did not appear to be willing to part with its stake.

In another development, sources said the Lorenzo family was keen on keeping its current stake in DMPL and was "interested" to match the highest offer for the 40-percent stake of Cirio.

Sources said DMPL managing director Martin Lorenzo told investors about this plan in a company briefing last Feb. 22 in Singapore.

Lorenzo was, however, unavailable for comment when the INQUIRER tried to reach him.

The Lorenzos, the second biggest stakeholder of DMPL, have the option to match the highest bid for the 40-percent block held by Italian food maker Cirio Finaziara.

Sources said the Lorenzos could exercise their right over 29 percent out of the 40 percent that is being sold by Cirio, which is valued at roughly $126 million as of last Friday. The entire 40-percent block is worth $174 million.

Mison indicated the group would be more interested in DMPL if it could get majority control.

The Lucio Tan group has interests in tobacco and liquor, manufacturing, property, banking, airline and airline services and education.

Cirio had accepted the offer of the Lucio Tan group to buy its 40-percent stake, but it has yet to sign a definitive agreement on the sale.

The Italian firm earlier defaulted on more than 1 billion euros (about $1.33 billion) in debts and the proceeds from the sale would be used to pay off its debts.

It earlier secured the approval of Italy's Ministry of Trade and Industry to award the stake in DMPL to Basic Holdings.

The shareholders of DMPL, which is listed on the Singapore Stock Exchange, however, were asked not to expect an offer from the Tan group to buy their minority shares.

"...Shareholders should be aware that the definitive agreement has not yet been signed and there is no certainty that a mandatory general offer for DMPL will take place," the disclosure said.

"Even if a definitive agreement is signed, there is also no certainty that a mandatory general offer for DMPL will take place," it added.

Analysts said the Lucio Tan group might be able to avoid a tender offering if the deal would be structured in such a way that it would end up buying a holding company instead of directly acquiring the shares in DMPL.

On the other hand, a mandatory offering could make the buyout more expensive for the Lucio Tan group.

e-Telecare eyes listing on Nasdaq, PSE

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

CALL CENTER operator e-Telecare Global Solutions is exploring the possibility of listing its shares on the tech-heavy Nasdaq in the United States.

Proceeds from the listing will be used to fund the further expansion of its operations, according to informed sources.

Sources added that e-Telecare was also reviewing the invitation from the Philippine Stock Exchange (PSE) to list part of its shares on the local bourse.

eTelecare is one of the country's biggest operators of call centers, with 4,000 seats distributed among four call centers.

It has another 3,000 seats in the United States, where it operates eight call centers.

e-Telecare was estimated to have P3 billion worth of cash and receivables.

Founded in 1999, eTelecare Global Solutions provides contact center operations for leading financial, computer and telecommunications firms.

By combining the management experience of former McKinsey consultants with affordable, highly-educated agents in the US and the Philippines, eTelecare Global Solutions raises the bar for quality and lowers the total cost of service.

Aside from e-Telecare Global Solutions, the PSE has also invited Chikka Txt Messenger, a popular gateway to texting through mobile phones, to sell its shares to the public.

Yehey.com, 88-percent owned by listed firm iVantage Corp., is already targeting an initial public offering by next year at the latest.

The country's leading search engine was encouraged to consider listing its shares by the return of investor interest in the local market.

Maritime hub full steam ahead

From page B1

economy as well as convenience and efficiency in shipping operations and resource utilization.

A joint undertaking of the Department of Transportation and Communications and the Phividec Industrial Authority, the MIP is a project that Undersecretary Agustin R. Bengzon introduced, got approval for, and inaugurated, when he was the head of the Maritime Industry Authority (Marina).

The MIP is envisaged as a major initiative toward enhancing and accelerating the development of the Philippine maritime industry. This single step underscores the maritime industry as a major contributor to the economic growth and development of the Philippine economy and the Philippines' significant role in the global maritime community.

The PIE now throbs with industrial activity, as a good number of large and medium-scale corporations have located their plants there. Over 40 locators are already operational, including Philippine Sinter Corp. (Kawasaki Steel Corp.), Pacific Activated Carbon Corp., Mindanao Silicon Metal and Sacramento Steel. Several other metal manufacturers, a furniture and a plywood factory, two chicken-dressing plants and a few wood processing plants are also at the PIE.

San Miguel Foods Inc. is building its facilities for animal feeds on 60 hectares of land, with more property reserved by them for later expansion. TLC Beatriz Foods of Loida Nicolas-Lewis is developing four hectares for a venture involving hogs processing, slaughtering, blast-freezing and exporting.

Gateway to the world

Former PIA chief executive officer Gabriel Evangelista said, "We have the land, the port facility, good water, access roads, and electricity. All the basics are there for light and heavy industries."

The PIE has its own port, the Mindanao Container Terminal that can service the shipping requirements of locators. The MCT is a world-class port equipped with side gantry cranes and state-of-the-art facilities including a one-stop-shop to process documentation. This recently opened flagship project is Mindanao's gateway to the world and supports the realization of Mindanao as a food basket of the country, and an agri-industrial exporter.

The MIP is an ideal location for joint ventures in shipbuilding and related enterprises serving not only the country's requirements for steel-hulled vessels, but also those of the Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines-East Asia Growth Area (BIMP-Eaga).

The site is strategically situated within the BIMP-Eaga region, on the Pacific Rim, and midpoint from Australia and the economies of Japan, China, South Korea and Taiwan. The increasing activity of both local and foreign fishing and merchant marine ships in the area, and traversing the archipelagic sea lanes of the Philippines, require support facilities that will ensure safe and maximum operation and utilization of every ship. This includes ships passing through the Straits of Malacca , which has a ship traffic of around 50,000 vessels carrying roughly a quarter of the world's maritime trade and half of all seaborne oil shipments.

The MIP enjoys natural and location advantages. It has several kilometers of shoreline where some areas can accommodate large vessels. River networks and generally flat land may house firms with large area requirements. Water supply for domestic and industrial use is abundant, and electricity is readily available. The area is outside of the typhoon and earthquake belts, and boasts of stable peace and order conditions.

Advantages, incentives

The industrial park is closely linked to Manila and other key cities in the Visayas and Mindanao by reliable sea, air and all-weather land routes and state-of-the-art communication facilities. It is only a 20-minute drive from the rapidly developing city of Cagayan de Oro, and 40 minutes away from the city's Lumbia airport. Soon, an international airport will rise in Laguindingan.

It is close to sources of basic industrial outputs and other raw material in and outside of the Philippines. The amenities of modern living are close by: first class hotels, shopping malls, health care facilities, first-class educational institutions, housing projects, two world-class golf courses (one is five minutes away from the airport, the other, 30 minutes form the MIP), and other recreational outlets. A large number of banks and financial institutions have branches in Cagayan de Oro.

A host of incentives and benefits under Republic Act No. 7916 are offered to MIP locators and investors by the Board of Investments and the Philippine Export Zone Authority. Phividec offers low water and electric power rates comparable to those of other countries in Asia. Incentives to foreign investors under RA No. 8756 allow multinational corporations broader privileges in their establishment of regional operating headquarters.

Maritime investor-locators are offered four investment opportunities:

- Establishing shipbuilding, ship conversion and ship breaking facilities catering to the demands of the domestic shipping and fishing industries in the Philippines, the Philippine Navy/Coast Guard, maritime-dependent countries in the region, and other ships operating in the area.
- Developing an oil depot and tank farm, with a possible oil refinery in the future, to maximize the benefits of oil deregulation which will result in more competitive prices of refined oil products to benefit consumers in Mindanao and the Visayas region.
- Locating the Asean+3 (Asean, China, Korea and Japan) regional oil stockpile (Southeast Asia Petroleum Hub) for stockpiling and distributing oil in the region to mitigate the effects of the increasing volatility of world oil supply and prices; and,
- Establishing ancillary industries for shipbuilding activities and other maritime support services to ensure the availability of quality products and services at reasonable prices.

"There exists a potential domestic demand for steel-hulled ships," Undersecretary Agustin Bengzon of the DOTC points out. Well known for his long experience as a top executive in the shipping industry, he is the chief promoter of shipbuilding in the Philippines, working together with other stakeholders to fashion a promising package of shipbuilding programs and financing to make it succeed.

Prospects, potentials

Bengzon said, "With the financing scheme enabling both the public and private sectors to avail themselves of ships locally, and the wide-ranging incentives offered investors in the shipbuilding industry, we believe everything is in place for the Philippines to see a new era in the domestic shipbuilding industry."

Citing the Abu Dhabi experience which inaugurated their maritime services hub in January 2001, Bengzon is now exploring the idea of a joint venture on a bigger scale, which would establish, operate and manage a maritime services hub. The Philippines would bring into the joint venture land, skilled labor and local market access. The foreign partner, for his part, would contribute technology, experience and foreign and regional market access.

The MIP offers an attractive option for shipbuilding investors to consider, given its strategic location, geography, infrastructure and facilities. It is an added feature that brings the upgrading and modernization of the shipbuilding industry closer to reality.

DISCLOSURES

EXPORT and Industry Bank Inc. said it had no information relating to reports that accounting firm Punongbayan and Araullo was scheduled to conduct due diligence on the bank on behalf of the Lippo Group of Indonesia and Banco de Oro Universal Bank.

* * *

BANCO de Oro Universal Bank denied reports that accounting firm Punongbayan and Araullo was scheduled to conduct due diligence on Export and Industry Bank Inc. on behalf of BDO.

* * *

HOLCIM Philippines Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on May 27 with record date of April 27. Venue and time will be announced soon.

* * *

BACNOTAN Consolidated Industries Inc. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 11, 3 p.m. at Makati Shangri-La, Makati. Record date is March 17.

* * *

Ayala Corp. will hold its annual stockholders' meeting on April 7, 2:30 p.m. at the InterContinental Manila, Makati. Stockholders of record at the close of business on Feb. 22 are entitled to notice of and vote at the meeting.

* * *

VANTAGE Corp. transferred on March 4 all its equity to Nexus Technologies Inc., equivalent to 178,972 shares for P41.16 million. ***Compiled by: Ray Leyesa, PDI Research***

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of March 7, 2005)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Asiatrust Dev. Bank Inc.	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.5	6,000
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	29.5	30	29.5	30	774,200
Bank of the Phil. Islands	59.5	60	59.5	59.5	1,369,500
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	52	52	51	51.5	1,025,300
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	1	1	0.92	0.92	12,510,000
International Exch. Bank	19	19	19	19	95,000
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	36.5	37	36	36	1,333,700
Philippine National Bank	32	32	32	32	24,500
Phil. Savings Bank	33	33	33	33	2,000
Security Bank Corp.	31.5	31.5	31.5	31.5	40,100
Union Bank of the Phil.	31.5	31.5	31.5	31.5	58,000
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
Bankard Inc.	1	1	1	1	20,000
Manulife Financial Corp.	2450	2500	2450	2500	730
PCI Leasing & Fin. Inc.	2.08	2.1	2.08	2.08	160,000
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	137	140	137	140	4,960
Sun Life Financial Inc.	1735	1740	1735	1740	570
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	18	18.25	18	18	28,500
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	1.52	1.6	1.52	1.6	7,902,000
Easycall Phils. Inc.-Com	4.5	5.2	4.5	5.2	47,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	940	970	940	955	75,550
ISM Communications Corp.	0.0625	0.065	0.0625	0.065	9,600,000
Liberty Telecoms Holdings	0.39	0.4	0.39	0.4	220,000
Manila Bulletin Pub. Corp.	2.08	2.08	2.08	2.08	76,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.8	3.95	3.8	3.85	17,197,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1485	1495	1480	1490	229,710
Ivantage Corp.	0.8	0.8	0.77	0.78	1,180,000
Philweb Corp.	0.021	0.022	0.021	0.022	129,300,000
POWER & ENERGY					
Manila Electric Co. A	19.75	21	19.75	21	306,300
Manila Electric Co. B	32	32.5	31.5	32	1,113,600
Petron Corp.	4.05	4.25	4.05	4.25	8,758,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	1.46	1.5	1.46	1.48	705,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Aboitiz Trans. Sys. Corp.	1.76	1.82	1.76	1.82	226,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	8.3	8.5	8.3	8.5	123,000
Keppel Phils. Marine Inc.	0.63	0.64	0.63	0.64	530,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.75	0.75	0.71	0.71	3,550,000
Fortune Cement Corp.	1	1	1	1	100,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	4.3	4.45	4.3	4.4	6,834,000
Phil Nat'l Const. Corp.	3.7	3.7	3.7	3.7	10,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.8	3.8	3.8	3.8	56,000
Cosmos Bottling Corp.	4.1	4.1	4.1	4.1	8,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	36.5	36.5	36	36	73,700
Jollibee Foods Corp.	30	30	30	30	386,100
Liberty Flour Mills Inc.	14	14	14	14	12,200
Pancake House Inc.	1.36	1.36	1.36	1.36	2,000
RFM Corp.	1.14	1.14	0.98	1.06	3,150,000
Swift Food Inc.	0.42	0.42	0.42	0.42	30,000
San Miguel Corp. A	57	57	56.5	57	90,300
San Miguel Corp. B	79	80	79	80	26,900
Universal Robina Corp.	10.75	10.75	10.5	10.5	4,600
Vitarich Corp.	0.29	0.3	0.29	0.3	560,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Atok-Big Wedge Co. Inc.	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	2,000
Abacus Con Res & Hdg A	0.01	0.011	0.01	0.011	305,000,000
Ayala Corp.	8.5	8.6	8.4	8.5	7,568,000
Alsons Cons. Res. Inc.	0.71	0.74	0.69	0.7	3,120,000
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	4.9	4.9	4.9	4.9	460,000
Alliance Global Group Inc.	11	11	11	11	2,000
Ajo Net Holdings Inc.	0.07	0.0725	0.0625	0.0675	54,400,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.42	2.65	2.4	2.48	11,917,000
APC Group Inc.	0.49	0.49	0.46	0.46	1,100,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	87,000,000
Anglo Phil Holdings Corp.	0.33	0.33	0.33	0.33	70,000
Aries Prime Res. Inc.	0.91	0.91	0.91	0.91	10,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.	1.28	1.28	1.28	1.28	25,000
Balabac Resources & Hldgs	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8	10,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	24.5	29	24.5	28	577,100
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.24	0.24	0.205	0.21	8,160,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1.34	1.42	1.34	1.36	41,353,000
A Brown Company Inc.	0.96	0.96	0.96	0.96	150,000
Basic Consolidated Inc.	0.23	0.23	0.23	0.23	500,000
CADP Group Corp.	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	20,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.26	0.26	0.26	0.26	2,450,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.55	0.55	0.53	0.54	1,540,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	4.1	4.5	4.1	4.45	11,099,000
Ever-Gotesco Resources	0.0575	0.0575	0.055	0.055	3,500,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.48	1.5	1.48	1.5	54,000
Fil-Hispano Holdings Corp.	10.5	11	10.5	10.75	1,396,200
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	58.5	61	58.5	61	1,181,600
Forum Pacific Inc.	0.27	0.27	0.26	0.26	250,000
Global Equities Inc.	0.12	0.125	0.115	0.12	13,750,000
House Of Investments Inc.	1.78	1.82	1.78	1.82	1,386,000
Ionics Inc.	1.74	1.76	1.7	1.7	162,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	3.5	3.7	3.5	3.65	2,322,000
Macroasia Corp.	2	2.04	2	2	430,000
Medco Holdings	0.5	0.5	0.46	0.46	530,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.72	1.86	1.72	1.74	14,504,000
Mabuhay Holdings Corp.	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	500,000
Multitech Inv. Corp.	0.41	0.58	0.41	0.5	930,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.6	0.63	0.6	0.62	55,200,000
Prime Media Holdings Inc.	1.34	1.46	1.34	1.46	563,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.32	0.34	0.32	0.34	710,000
Roxas Holdings Inc.	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.06	330,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.63	0.65	0.63	0.65	450,000
South China Resources Inc.	0.59	0.59	0.58	0.58	120,000
Tanduay Holdings Inc.	2.95	2.95	2.95	2.95	7,000
Uniwide Holdings Inc.	0.205	0.21	0.2	0.205	11,590,000
Wellex Industries Inc.	0.2	0.21	0.2	0.21	1,460,000
Waterfront Phils. Inc.	0.33	0.33	0.32	0.33	1,910,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Active Alliance Inc.	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.3	20,000
Cen Azucar De Tarlac	3.3	3.3	3.3	3.3	1,000
Metro Alliance Holdings	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	10,000
Music Semiconductors Corp.	1.7	1.7	1.58	1.68	261,000
Picop Resources Inc.	0.14	0.16	0.14	0.16	17,530,000
Steniel Manufacturing	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	100,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	1.62	1.72	1.62	1.64	97,721,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	1.22	1.26	1.22	1.22	2,700,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.6	1.62	1.48	1.5	5,577,000
Manila Jockey Club	4.2	4.2	4.2	4.2	20,000
Premiere Ent. Prod. Inc.	0.4	0.4	0.39	0.39	500,000
Philippine Racing Club	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	35,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-Cbn Hldgs. Corp. (Pdr)	17.5	17.75	17.5	17.75	636,100
ATS Corp. - Preferred	2	2	2	2	57,000
PLDT (10% Pref) Series T	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	100
PLDT (10% Pref) Series X	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	3,900
PLDT 10% Pref Series Aa	10.25	10.25	10.25	10.25	3,300
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	9.5	9.7	9.5	9.7	13,086,000
Araneta Properties Inc.	0.52	0.58	0.31	0.31	820,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	1	1.02	1	1.02	1,450,000
C & P Homes Inc.	0.35	0.37	0.35	0.36	14,590,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.34	0.37	0.34	0.35	10,890,000
EIB Realty Developers Inc.	0.27	0.27	0.27	0.27	200,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.53	0.61	0.53	0.6	123,350,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.86	2.06	1.86	1.98	11,429,000
Gotesco Land Inc B	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	100,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.27	0.28	0.27	0.27	2,080,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.76	0.76	0.76	0.76	3,020,000
MRC Allied Ind. Inc.	0.22	0.22	0.21	0.22	2,460,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.24	0.24	0.24	0.24	10,000
Primex Corp.	3.65	3.65	3.65	3.65	16,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	3.1	3.25	3.1	3.2	468,000
Phil Realty And Holdings	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	1,600,000
SM Development Corp.	1.86	1.88	1.86	1.88	669,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc	9	9.7	9	9.4	14,494,000
MINING					
Apex Mining Co. Inc. A	1.02	1.02	1.02	1.02	133,000
Apex Mining Co. Inc. B	1.06	1.06	1.06	1.06	23,000
Abra Mining & Industrial	0.012	0.012	0.012	0.012	3,000,000
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	6.1	6.3	6.1	6.1	615,000
Dizon Copper Silver Mines	3.3	3.5	3.3	3.5	60,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.41	0.41	0.4	0.4	9,680,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.44	0.45	0.43	0.44	13,920,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	77,600,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.028	0.028	0.028	0.028	85,400,000
Omico Corp.	0.011	0.011	0.01	0.01	789,700,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	1.14	1.18	1.14	1.14	513,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	1.44	1.44	1.4	1.42	775,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	43.5	44	42.5	43	21,610,200
OIL					
Interport Res.	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	5,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.0075	0.008	0.0075	0.0075	183,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	0.0085	10,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.36	0.37	0.36	0.36	190,000
The Philodrill Corp. B	0.38	0.38	0.38	0.38	180,000
Pacifica	0.016	0.016	0.015	0.015	22,600,000
Sinophil Corp.	0.225	0.26	0.225	0.24	43,480,000
Vulcan Ind'l	0.37	0.38	0.37	0.38	800,000

CURRENCIES

March 7, 2005 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.754944889	1.000000	54.9640
Japan	Yen	0.007208	0.009548	0.5248
United Kingdom	Pound	1.452514	1.924000	105.7507
Hongkong	Dollar	0.096794	0.128213	7.0471
Switzerland	Franc	0.64597	0.855652	47.0301
Canada	Dollar	0.613378	0.812480	44.6572
Singapore	Dollar	0.464582	0.615385	33.8240
Australia	Dollar	0.598071	0.792205	43.5428
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.002559	2.652590	145.7970
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.201319	0.266667	14.6571
Brunei	Dollar	0.463156	0.613497	33.7202
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000081	0.000107	0.0059
Thailand	Baht	0.019655	0.026035	1.4310
UAE	Dirham	0.205556	0.272279	14.9655
Euro	Euro	1	1.324600	72.8053
Argentina	Peso	0.257222	0.340716	18.7271
Brazil	REAL	0.284777	0.377216	20.7333
Denmark	Kroner	0.134367	0.177983	9.7827
India	Rupee	0.0173	0.022915	1.2595
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.198696	0.263193	14.4661
Mexico	New Peso	0.068432	0.090645	4.9822
New Zealand	Dollar	0.554903	0.735024	40.3999
Norway	Kroner	0.121468	0.160896	8.8435
Pakistan	Rupee	0.012725	0.016855	0.9264
South Africa	Rand	0.128885	0.170721	9.3835
Korea	Won	0.000749	0.000992	0.0545
Sweden	Kroner	0.110636	0.146548	8.0549
Syria	Pound	0.014543	0.019264	1.0588
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.024503	0.032457	1.7840
Venezuela	Bolivar	0.000352	0.000466	0.0256

Asian stocks extend rally on optimism over US

SINGAPORE—Asian share markets firmed on Monday on optimism over the US economy, with Japan hitting a 10-month high as Sony named a new chief executive and the rest of the region touching a seven-year peak.

But some tech stocks dipped after Samsung Electronics Co. Ltd., the world's top flat-screen maker, said prices of liquid crystal displays (LCDs) won't rebound until the fourth quarter, up to six months later than its previous projection.

US oil prices hovered about $2 off their all-time peak, while the dollar was steady.

Japan's Nikkei stock index climbed for an eighth straight session, rising 0.44 percent to 11,925.36, its highest close since April 28.

MSCI's index of non-Japan shares rose 0.26 percent after touching its strongest level since August 1997, at the height of the Asian financial crisis.

European shares were expected to open higher, building on the FTSEurofirst 300's rise to a 33-month peak.

Sony Corp. shares jumped 1.5 percent in Tokyo as the company named the British-born head of its US operations, Howard Stringer, as chair and chief executive to replace Nobuyuki Idei.

"It looks like the rainy, cloudy weather that's been hanging over Sony could turn sunny," said Kazunori Ohtomo, senior fund manager at STB Asset Management.

"I think we can expect a more American-style type of management, which is fitting as Sony is now at the point where it must embark on a 'scrap and build' period of restructuring".

The Nikkei rise marked the index's longest winning streak since August 1999, when it gained 4.7 percent also over eight days. It has gained 3.7 percent in the latest rally.

Australia's main stock market index rose 0.43 percent after briefly touching a record high of 4,247.9, led by miners BHP Billiton, up 1.79 percent and Rio Tinto, up 1.11 percent. But the index was capped by a large number of stocks going ex-dividend.

Elsewhere in the region, Singapore's Straits Times Index rose 0.74 percent, Taiwan's weighted index gained 0.43 percent and Hong Kong's Hang Seng Index climbed 0.43 percent.

South Korea's KOSPI index was the sole decliner among Asia's major markets.

It reversed morning gains and fell 0.54 percent on the Samsung concerns and following the resignation of Finance Minister Lee Hun-jai amid allegations of improper real estate deals.

Shares in Samsung fell 0.6 percent after its LCD comments and rival LG.Philips lost 3.42 percent. The falls were offset by gains of 3.92 percent in shares of steelmaker POSCO.

On Friday, the Dow closed at its highest level since June 2001, while the S&P 500 closed at its highest since July 2001.

Strong job gains in February boosted sentiment, lifting the Dow Jones industrial average 0.99 percent to end at 10,940.55, while the Nasdaq Composite Index climbed 0.59 percent to 2,070.61.

Analysts said the jobs report could continue to support the market this week, but high oil prices may remain a spoiler.

US light crude for April delivery slid 16 cents to $53.62 a barrel by 0633 GMT after soaring as high as $55.20 last week.

A record $55.67 was hit in October.

The dollar was flat near 104.75 yen compared with 104.70 yen in late New York trade on Friday, when it slid about half a percent after the jobs data.

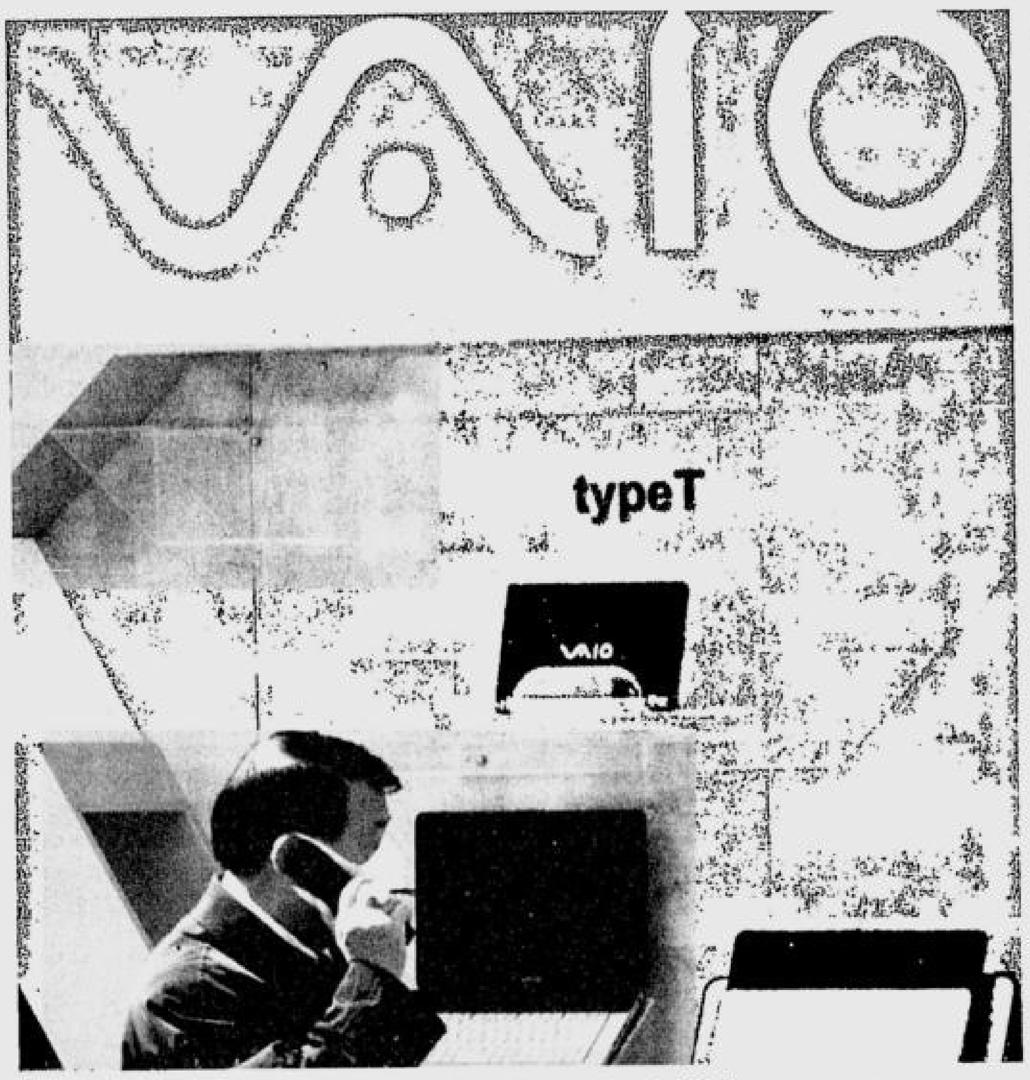
The euro was steady around 1.3230, compared with levels late Friday around $1.3241

Spot gold moved higher to $435.30 an ounce, compared with $434 late in New York.

Among active stocks in Asia, exporters Canon Inc. and Honda Motor Co. rose 0.72 percent and 1.07 percent, respectively.

Other key movers included systems integrator NTT Data Corp., which surged 5.15 percent.

Mizuho Financial Group, Japan's biggest banking group by assets, rose 1.73 percent, while Mitsubishi Tokyo Financial Group rose 0.95 percent. *Reuters*



A MASKED man uses a mobile phone as he walks past Sony's Vaio laptop computers on display at a Tokyo mass sales store. Sony Corp. on Monday appointed as chair Howard Stringer, an executive who oversees its entertainment business—the first time a foreigner heads a major Japanese electronics maker and a groundbreaking move symbolizing Sony's determination to make change. AP

Oil prices hold above $53 a barrel

SINGAPORE—Oil prices held steady on Monday, planted firmly above $53 a barrel, after three Opec countries said they saw no need for the producers' cartel to increase output despite crude hovering near to four-month highs.

US light crude slipped 11 cents to $53.67 a barrel, $2 below last October's record $55.67, but more than 18 percent higher than a month ago.

Iran and Qatar lined up with Venezuela against boosting Opec production.

The group's president on Sunday expressed concern over high prices but said the market was well supplied.

"Opec is concerned about this price development despite the fact that the market is well-supplied and global crude oil stocks have continued to build," Opec President and Kuwaiti Oil Minister Sheikh Ahmad al-Fahd al-Sabah said in a statement.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries meets on March 16 in Iran to review production policy.

Ministers are usually wary of pumping more crude going into the second quarter, because demand traditionally falls as the northern hemisphere winter draws to a close.

But the latest price rally to near-record levels prompted Nigeria to say on Friday that Opec may discuss next week an output increase or a relaxation of official production limits.

Opec is already pumping above its limit of 27 million barrels per day (bpd) at about 27.63 million bpd in February, a Reuters survey showed on Friday.

Saudi Arabia accounted for a little more than three-quarters of the leakage above the formal ceiling, with production rising 190,000 bpd from January.

"The Saudis are the ones with the lion's share of the world's spare capacity, so what they want, essentially I think they will get," said David Thurtell, commodities strategist at Commonwealth Bank of Australia.

"And I am still not convinced they (Saudi Arabia) are comfortable with oil above $50."

Speculators, who last week helped push prices to within 50 cents of October's record high, are counting on a further rise in prices and have extended their net long positions in the US crude futures market to the highest level since June 2004.

Central bankers from top developing and industrial countries said after a weekend meeting that they are keeping a wary eye on climbing oil costs, despite an upbeat overall outlook for world economic growth.

US Treasury Secretary John Snow said on Sunday that energy prices were "way, way too high", but that the US economy had been robust enough to weather the impact on growth.

US economic policy makers are watching closely for any signs higher energy costs could contribute to rising inflation, but say that so far, there is no evidence of that. *Reuters*

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Thai 2004 Q4 GDP up 1.8%

BANGKOK—Thailand's economy grew more than expected in the fourth quarter of 2004 and could expand up to 6.5 percent this year despite tsunami damage to the tourist industry, the state planning agency said on Monday.

Gross domestic product rose a seasonally adjusted 1.8 percent in the October-December period from the previous quarter, fueled by strong exports and a healthy current account surplus, the National Economic and Social Development Board said.

The figures helped boost the main stock index, which gained 4.59 points, or 0.63 percent, in morning trade after the data was announced.

The baht was steady as the market focused more on US dollar news.

Fourth-quarter growth, following revised 1.5 percent expansion in the previous three months, left full-year gross domestic product 6.1 percent higher than 2003.

But the economy grew a slower-than-expected 5.1 percent between the fourth quarter of 2004 and the same quarter in 2003, cooling from revised 6.1 percent growth in the year through the third quarter, to mark the slowest pace in 11 quarters.

Looking forward, the economy should ride out the Dec. 26 tsunami, which wrecked dozens of resorts in the south and killed more than 5,300 people in Thailand, planning agency chief Amphon Kittiamphon said.

The damage would be offset by rebuilding and new infrastructure investment planned by the government, he said.

"The impact of the tsunami is smaller than expected and would be compensated for by substantial new investment funds to be injected into the economy, including a 50 billion baht mid-year government budget," he told reporters, referring to the equivalent of $1.3 billion. *Reuters*

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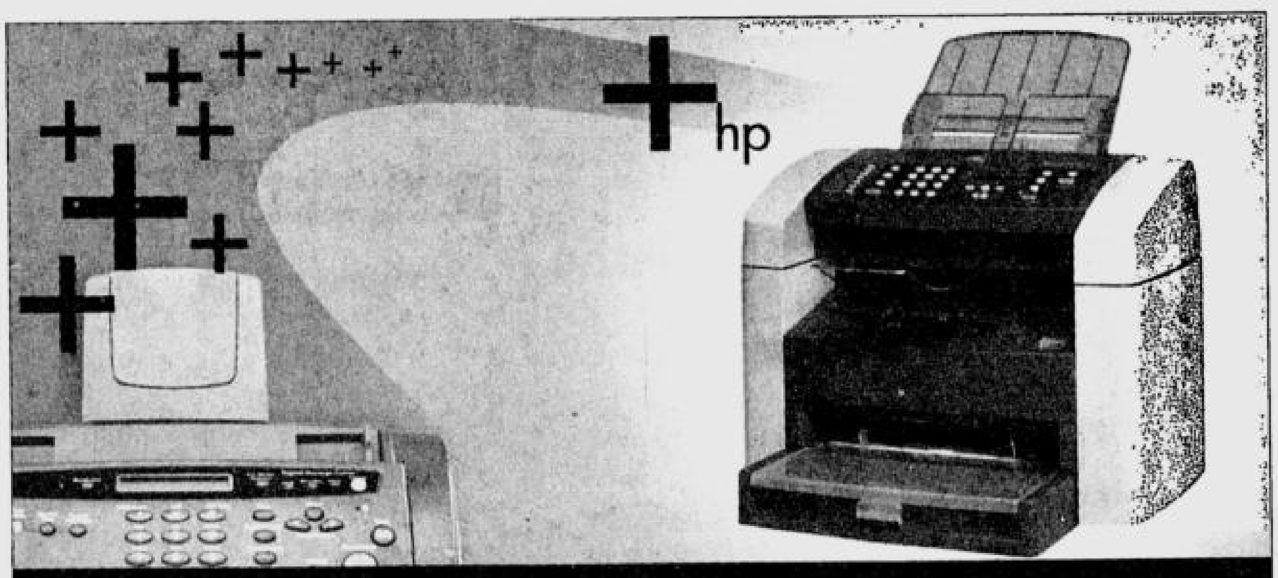

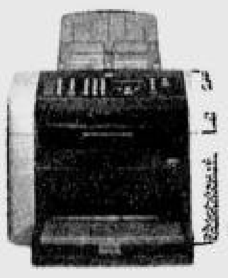

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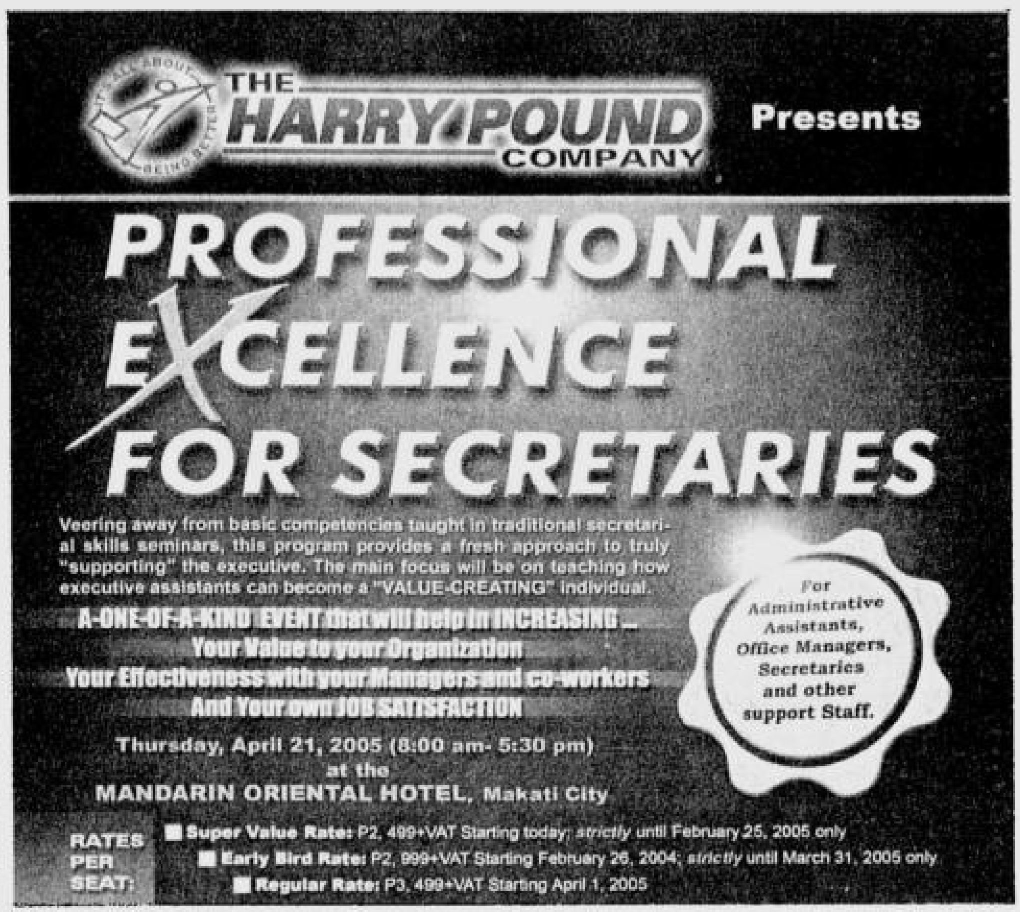
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NATIONAL POWER CORPORATION
Diliman, Quezon City

INVITATION TO BID FOR THE SALE OF UNSERVICEABLE ITEMS

"AS IS, WHERE IS" BASIS

DATE OF BIDDING: March 22, 2005, 2:00 PM, Solarium Hall, Building-1, Ground Floor NPC-Head Office, Agham Road corner Quezon Ave., Diliman, Q.C

The National Power Corporation will conduct public bidding for the sale of the following:

ITEM	DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION	MIN. BID PRICE
	Schedule I	
-1-	One (1) Lot: Unserviceable, Used and Junk Substation Equipment (OCB, GCB, CT, PT, DS); General Plant Equipment and Parts, Assorted Scrap Metals and Power Cables. Located at NPC Bataan TPP compound and at TRANSCO Limay Substation stockyard, Barangay Luz, Limay Town, Bataan Province.	P1,169,590.00 per lot
	Schedule II	
-1-	One (1) Lot: Unserviceable Power Transformer with "PCB-Free" Transformer Oil and Junk General Plant Equipment, Used Automotive/Diesel Engine Parts, Busted Lead-Acid Batteries and Assorted Scrap Metals. Located at NPC SPUG Office, KM-36 Newtown Road, Brgy. Minuyan, San Jose Del Monte City (Bulacan). Note: This disposal/sale is limited to EMB-DENR accredited Transporters and/or TSD Facility Operators (Treaters) only.	P212,985.00 per lot
	Schedule III	
-1-	One (1) Lot. Unserviceable Steel Tower Parts, Junk Substation Equipment and Empty Steel Drums. Located at TRANSCO Kalayaan EHV Substation, Caliraya, Laguna Province.	P885,000.00 per lot

ALL BIDS MUST BE SUBMITTED WITH THE FOLLOWING:

1 PROPOSAL BOND DEPOSIT IN THE FORM OF CASH OR MANAGER'S/CASHIER'S CHECK EQUIVALENT TO TEN PERCENT (10%) OF THE TOTAL PRICE OFFER.
2 LATEST INCOME TAX RETURN (2003 or 2004) ORIGINAL OR CERTIFIED XEROX COPY FOR THE BIDDER OR AN AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF THE COMPANY.
3. EMB-DENR ACCREDITATIONS FOR INTERESTED PARTIES TO SCHEDULE-II.

All interested parties who wish to secure the bid forms for this public bidding must present a valid Income Tax Return (2003/2004 original or BIR certified copy) and valid identification card with picture (such as Company IDs, Passport, Driver's License, PRC Licensure Card, etc.). Those who secured the bid forms for Schedule-II of the February 24, 2005 public bidding will be issued the new bid forms of Schedule-I free of charge. Interested parties for Schedule-II must present original EMB-DENR accreditations.

Interested parties who wish to participate in the public bidding may secure the bid form at P500.00/set from Mr. S.V. Lomuntad, Jr./Mr. Al Pinta at MMD, Ground Floor, Bldg.-1, NPC Head Office, Corner Agham Road and Quezon Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City or call telephone no. 924-5384. Deadline for issuance of the bid forms is until 4:30 PM, March 21, 2005.

For the Materials Management Department

(Sgd.) FELIX B. TACATA, JR.
OIC, MMD

(PDI - March 7, 8 & 9, 2005)

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ERRATUM

In the obituary ad of **SOLEDAD DEL PRADO** which came out on March 7, 2005 in this paper, **Ligones** was inadvertently printed as Ligorres.

Our apologies.

OFELIA ALBERTO FLORDELIZ

OF NAGA CITY

January 26, 1926 – March 5, 2005

Her sons **Marinel** and **Jerenel**, brothers and sisters, and cousins request readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Interment: March 9, 2005, Peñafrancia Cemetery.

ATTY. BENITO B. SALES JR.

of Ilagan, Isabela

was called home to the Lord on March 2, 2005.

His bereaved wife **Olive**; children **Johnbee**, **Benito III & Emy**, **Princess & Gabby**, **Bonita & June**; together with his grandchildren **Dwyn**, **June-Phillip**, **Benito IV**, **Gabe** and relatives request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Sales residence, Ilagan, Isabela. Interment will be on March 9, 2005 at Ilagan Cemetery.

The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want
In verdant pastures, He gives me repose
Beside restfull waters He leads Me.
Psalm 23 verses 1-2

Felino L. Goquingco

Peacefully joined his Creator on March 5, 2005 at age of 87.

His bereaved wife, **Corazon Zamora Goquingco**; his children **Victor** and **Ann Goquingco**; **Chito** and **Bettina Goquingco**; **Marilou** and **Bobby Garcia**; **Dennis** and **Neva Goquingco**; **Peachy** and **Tony Lim**; **Pamela** and **Dodi Tan** and **Billy** and **Malou Goquingco**; his grandchildren **Anthony** and **Patrick**; **Tisha** and **Franz**; **Gerald**, **Mark** and **Martin**; **Julia**, **Miguel** and **Ramon**; **Paolo** and **Ria**; **Pamela**, **Joanna**, **Georgia** and **Jeffrey**; and **Ean**, **Angelica**, **Geo** and **Anel**; his sister, **Felipa L. Goquingco**, nephews, nieces, in-laws and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of his soul.

His remains lie in state at Parish Hall 3 at Santuario de San Jose in Greenhills East.

Interment will be on March 9, 2005 at the Manila Memorial Park, Parañaque after the 9:00 AM Mass at the Santuario de San Jose.

In lieu of flowers, donations to either Cribs Philippines Inc. or to Little Angels Homes Inc. will be greatly appreciated.

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IN CELEBRATION of its 30th year, Ateneo CORD is holding a very special Trendwatcher Series entitled "The Way We Work". This learning session will also feature the launching of the book with the same name. Published by the Ateneo de Manila University Press, it is a must-read for HR practitioners, managers, faculty and students in human resource management and industrial – organizational psychology. The book tackles the psychology of the Filipino worker as well as human resource management practices in Philippine organizations. Two articles from the book will be presented during the learning session- *Paradoxes of Leadership: Profile of Successful Filipino Leaders and Managing a Factory Closure: The Nestle Experience.* From these presentations find out: the qualities of successful Filipino leadersand what Nestle did for their employees to soften the impact of closure of its Alabang Factory. The learning session will be on April 15 at 130 – 430 pm at Petron Cultural Hall 358 Sen. Gil Puyat Ave., Makati. For more information, please contact Ateneo CORD 426-5931, 426-6282 or email ateneocord@admu.edu.ph

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Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas

BID AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

RE-INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS (BSP) invites A & E Consultants to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid for the Architectural and Engineering Design Consultancy Services for the BSP Branch Buildings in Legazpi and Naga.

The Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) is P9.12M.

The scope of work includes among others the preparation of plans, specifications and detailed estimates to include architectural, electrical, mechanical, structural, electronics and communication, plumbing/sanitary and landscaping works as specified in the Terms of Reference.

The Minimum eligibility requirements are as follows:

1.0 The firm must have been in operation for the last fifteen (15) years (reckoned from the date of the first advertisement/posting of this invitation).

2.0 The first must have rendered within the last ten (10) years (reckoned from the date of the first advertisement/posting of this invitation) A & E design consultancy services, at least three (3) completed new construction projects of similar nature like office buildings, banks, exchanges and financial institutions of similar magnitude as the proposed BSP projects and must be able to submit a certification of satisfactory performance for at least two (2) of the required three (3) projects.

3.0 The principal or Managing Officer must be a Registered Architect with at least twenty (20) years experience in architectural design and coordinating team efforts in A & E design.

4.0 The key personnel should be Registered Architect/s and Engineer/s with at least fifteen (15) years design experience.

5.0 The firm (partnership/corporation/joint venture) must be at least 60% owned by a Filipino citizen.

6.0 In case of a joint venture, a valid joint agreement. The joint venture must have rendered A & E design consultancy services for at least two (2) completed projects of similar magnitude as the proposed BSP project.

The quality-cost based evaluation procedure stipulated in the Implementing Rules and Regulations of RA No. 9184 shall be adopted for this consultancy service requirement.

Eligibility documents may be obtained from the BAC Secretariat on 08 to 15 March 2005 for a non-refundable fee of P200.00, Room 204, 2nd Floor, Five Storey Building at the BSP Main Complex, A. Mabini cor. P. Ocampo Streets, Manila and must be submitted duly accomplished to the same office not later than 4:30 p.m. on 21 March 2005.

The provisions of Republic Act No. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations relative to the bidding and award of contract shall apply.

BSP reserves the right to accept or reject any or all bids or parts thereof, to waive defect or any formality therein, or accept such bid or award any part thereof to any consultant/s whose bid/s is/are evaluated to be most advantageous to BSP. Furthermore, BSP is not obliged to compensate/indemnify the consultant for any expenses or loss that may be incurred in the preparation of bid nor does it guarantee that an award of contract will be made.

(Sgd.) **MELPIN A. GONZAGA**
Vice-Chairman

(PDI-March 8 & 15, 2005)

National Power Corporation

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

NPC-MMSD 2005-005

Adv. - March 1 & 8, 2005

The Bids and Awards Committee (BAC)-MMSD of NPC invites interested bidders to apply for eligibility and to bid for the following requirements.

Schedule	Date/Time & Place of Bidding	Item Description	PR No./Inquiry No.	ABC
I	March 22, 2005 10:00 AM Pahiyas Room	Hauling Services of Diesel Fuel from designated origin to different SPUG Luzon Power Plants and Barges	KCR PB050222-MMKR2466 (PB2) HO-LOD-05-0004	7,425,760.00

NOTE: A Pre-bidding Conference will be held for the following bidding schedules:

Schedule	Date	Time	Place
Schedule I	March 9, 2005	2:00 PM	Moriones Function Room

Complete sets of Application form for Eligibility and Bid Documents may be obtained from the Materials Management Services Division, Materials Management Dept., of NPC, Diliman, Quezon City with Tel. No. 9245357/9245477 upon payment of non-refundable fee of Php500.00 per schedule starting on **March 1, 2005**, from 8:30 to 11:30 a.m. only. No bid documents will be issued 3 days before the date of bidding.

Bids will be received at the assigned Bidding Room, MMSD, MMD, NPC, Diliman, Quezon City on the date and time specified above after which Eligibility Requirements and Bid Proposals will be opened in the presence of attending bidders. Certificate of Registration issued by PSD/MMSD will be honored provided that the Certification is still valid.

Prospective Bidders shall signify conformance to bidding terms and conditions as required and shall ensure the same through proper submission/execution in accordance with the IRR of Republic Act No. 9184.

The Bidder shall furnish as part of his/her bid, a bid security in the amount equivalent to a percentage of the approved budget for the contract to be bid in the form of Cash, Manager's/Cashier's Check, Irrevocable Letter of Credit - One Percent (1%), Bank Guarantee - One and a half percent (1.5%), Surety Bond - Two and a half percent (2.5%), penal and callable on demand issued by a Surety or Insurance Company accredited by the Office of the Insurance Commission.

NPC reserves the right to reject any or all bids at any time prior to award of contract, waive any defects therein, and accept the offer most advantageous to the Corporation, without thereby incurring any of the following: a) liability whatsoever to offset expenses or losses the bidder may incur in the preparation of the bids; and b) obligation to inform the affected bidder or bidders of the grounds for the basis of the BAC's action.

(Sgd.) **LORENZO S. MARCELO**
Chairman, Bids and Awards Committee
MMSD-NPC

(PDI - March 2 & 8, 2005)

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PNOC

Energy Center, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig, Metro Manila
Philippines MCPO Box 2102 Tel. No. 893-6001/1320

INVITATION FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Date: March 1, 2005
Loan Agreement No.: PH-P176
Contract No.: EDC 05-013

• The PNOC-Energy Development Corporation, hereinafter called PNOC-EDC has received an ODA Loan from Japan Bank for International Cooperation, hereinafter referred to as the JBIC, in the amount of Fourteen Billion Four Hundred Sixty Million Japanese Yen (Y14,460,000,000.00) towards the cost of the Northern Negros Geothermal Project and intends to apply a portion of the proceeds of the loan to payments under the contract for Detailed Engineering, Supply, Delivery, Installation, Testing, and Commissioning of the Electrical Power Supply System and Associated Electrical Equipment and Materials for the Northern Negros Geothermal Project Fluid Collection and Reinjection System. Disbursement of the Loan by JBIC will be subject, in all respects, to the terms and conditions of the Loan Agreement, including the disbursement procedures and the 'Guidelines for Procurement under JBIC ODA Loans'. No party other than PNOC-EDC shall derive any rights from the Loan Agreement or have any claim to Loan proceeds.

2 The Eligibility Documents and the Bid Documents shall be available for issuance to contractors starting March 1, 2005 from the Contracts Administration Group c/o R.A. Sison upon payment of a non-refundable fee for Five Thousand Pesos (P5,000.00) Philippine Currency or US Dollar One Hundred Fifty (US$150.00) per bid document in case of foreign bidders to defray courier expenses

3. For purposes of clarifying certain issues, interested bidders are invited to the Prebid conference to be held on March 18, 2005 at the 1st Floor Conference Room, Building 5, PNOC-EDC, Energy Center, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City. Site inspection will be held on (to be scheduled) at the PNOC-EDC's NNGP, Malum, Bago City, Negros Occidental

4. The two (2) stage bidding procedure shall be employed. For the first stage, bidders shall submit their respective Letter of Intent, sealed Application for Eligibility and the Initial Technical Proposal in three (3) sets to the Contracts Administration Group, PNOC Energy Development Corporation, Energy Center, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City, Philippines, not later than 2:00 P.M. on April 28, 2005. The bidders' Application for Eligibility and the initial TEchnical Proposal shall be evaluated and bidders who are eligible to bid will be notified by PNOC-EDC.

5 For the second stage, eligible bidders shall be required to submit their Final Technical Proposal and the Financial Proposal into two (2) separate sealed envelopes. All bids submitted by eligible bidders must be accompanied by a bid security in the form of a surety bond, certified check, bank draft, standby letter of credit or bank guarantee secured from a bank, local or foreign, acceptable to PNOC-EDC which shall be callable on demand for an amount of at Pesos One Million Four Hundred Thousand (P1,400,000.00). The bid security must be valid for a period of 120 days reckoned from the date of bid opening, and must be delivered to:

BAC Secretariat (Contracts Administration Group)

PNOC Energy Development Corporation

Energy Center, Merritt Road, Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City

at or before 2:00 P.M. on June 16, 2005. Bids will be opened immediately thereafter in the presence of bidder's representative who choose to attend.

6 PNOC-EDC reserves the right to annul the bidding process, to reject any and all bids, to waive any informality in the bids received and to accept such bid which is most advantageous to PNOC-EDC without thereby incurring liability to the affected bidder or bidders om the ground of PNOC-EDC's action.

7. DELIVERY SCHEDULE - The Goods under this invitation are required to be delivered within 180 days upon receipt of Letter of Credit. No credit will be given to earlier deliveries and bids offering delivery beyond 180 days will be treated as non-responsive

The Goods are considered to be delivered when all the items specified in the Contract have arrived at Manila Port or at any other location or port in the Philippines mutually agreed upon by the Bidder/Supplier and PNOC-EDC. Hence, the 180-day delivery period is inclusive of shipping time.

BAC CHAIRMAN

(PDI--March 8, 2005)

In Celebration of its 30th Anniversary Ateneo CORD
presents a very special Trendwatcher Series

The Way We Work

15 April 2005, 1:30- 4:30 pm
Cultural Hall, 34th Floor Petron Mega-Plaza
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This learning session will feature the launch of the book entitled 'The Way We Work". A must-read for HR practitioners, managers, faculty and students in human resource management and industrial–organizational psychology, the book includes 13 articles that tackle the psychology of the Filipino worker as well as human resource management in Philippine organizations. Two articles from the book will be presented. Find out:

- *The qualities of successful Filipino leaders*
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BUSINESS

BSP END-FEBRUARY REPORT

Forex reserves up 4.6% to $16.5B

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE COUNTRY'S gross international reserves climbed to a nine-month high of $16.48 billion in February, shored up by the government's fresh $1.5-billion global bond issuance.

Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura yesterday reported that the end-February GIR was 4.6 percent higher than the $15.75 billion of a month ago.

It was likewise much better than the $15.73 billion GIR posted in the same month last year.

Buenaventura said the higher GIR build-up in February was mainly due to the national government's deposit with the BSP of the proceeds of the global bond issue due in 2030.

"These inflows were, however, offset by the debt service requirements of the national government and the BSP," Buenaventura said.

The GIR—consisting of the BSP's gross foreign currency holdings, gold reserves, special drawing rights from multilateral institutions and foreign investments—is seen as an indicator of the country's ability to service foreign exchange requirements.

"The current GIR level was adequate to cover about 4.2 months of imports of goods and payments of services and income," Buenaventura said.

"This level was also equivalent to three times the country's short-term debt, based on original maturity and 1.5 times based on residual maturity," he added.

Short-term debt based on residual maturity pertains to outstanding short-term external debt on original maturity plus principal payments on medium- and long-term loans of the public and private sectors falling due within the next 12 months.

Buenaventura also said the country's net international reserves as of end-February, inclusive of revaluation of reserve assets and reserve-related liabilities, surged to $15.22 billion from $14.14 billion a month ago.

The BSP expects its GIR to stay flat at $14 to $15 billion in 2005, the same level targeted last year, amid a cautious outlook on the global business environment.

The slower build-up in foreign reserves last year was partly due to the slowdown in the current account surplus, a major component of the balance of payment.

BUENAVENTURA

The current account records trade in goods and services, as well as transfers, while the capital and financial account records loan transactions, investment flows, short-term capital and other related items.

For this year, the BSP expects the country to spend about $4.5 billion on foreign debt servicing, about $1 billion less than the requirements estimated in 2004.

The slowdown in these financing requirements, along with the much-improved portfolio investment inflows, is seen to contribute to the expected balance of payment surplus this year and lessen pressures on the peso exchange rate against the US dollar.

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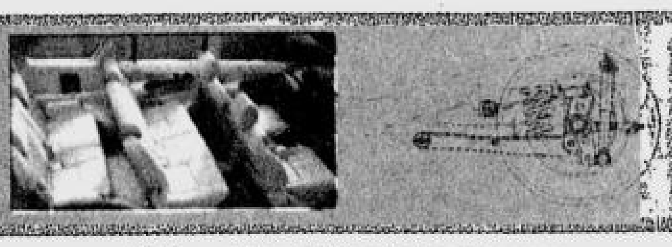

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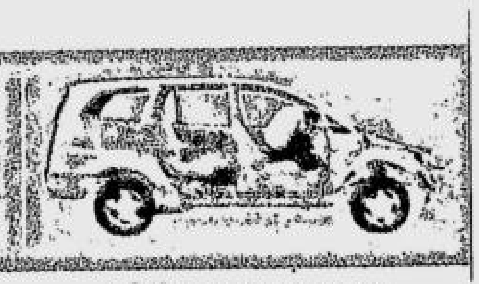

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TOYOTA

A SUMMER checklist
/C4

LIFESTYLE

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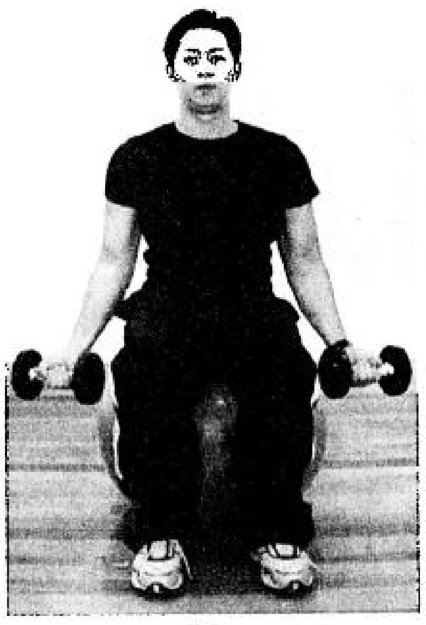
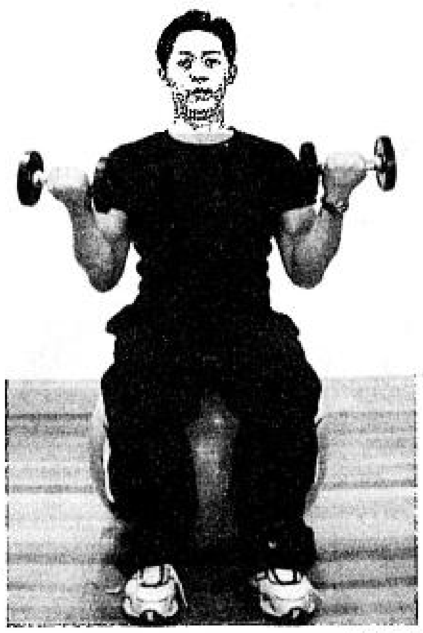
Editor **Chelo Banal-Formoso**

MONDAY **ARTS & BOOKS** ● TUESDAY **FITNESS** ● WEDNESDAY **2BU** ● THURSDAY **FOOD** ● FRIDAY **FASHION & BEAUTY**

EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

Biceps curl on stability ball





STRENGTHENS the biceps while challenging the "core" muscles.

Equipment:
Dumbbells and stability ball. Note: You can also do this exercise while seated on a bench or chair.

Exercise technique:

1. Sit on a stability ball with your feet flat on the floor. Keep torso erect with rib cage lifted and abdominals contracted.
2. Hold a dumbbell in each hand, palms facing front, arms straight down and elbows close to the waist.
3. Exhale as you bend your arms to curl the dumbbells toward your shoulders, keeping your elbows still.
4. Inhale as you lower the dumbbells to starting position.

Performance tips:

1. Keep your elbows "glued" to your side as you curl the arm.
2. Don't bend your wrist. Keep it straight with your forearm.
3. Maintain good posture throughout the exercise. Avoid rocking back and forth.

Repetitions:
12 to 15 repetitions.

Preventing back pain in daily activities

Part Two

WELL AND GOOD

Tina Juan

LOWER back pain may be caused by a single traumatic incident like a car accident. More often than not, however, it is caused by years of poor lifting techniques and poor posture in daily activities.

Follow these back-saving tips and you may never have to visit the doctor for a painful back.

In the office

From "Back Pain in Corporate America," Dr. James Peterson, Fitness Management Magazine:

- Get up from your desk occasionally. Avoid prolonged sitting.
- Keep the weight in your briefcase and/or carry-on luggage to a reasonable minimum.
- Keep your knees level with your hips and your feet flat on the floor while sitting.
- Consider a waist-high or a chest-high work surface as an alternative to sitting.
- Use a chair with a firm back support. The support should enable you to maintain the natural curve in your lower back without undue muscular effort on your part.
- Use a chair with armrests, if possible. Support provided by armrests helps to ease the load on your spine.
- Avoid leaning forward while sitting to work at a desk or table.
- Wear comfortable shoes. Women should avoid wearing high-heeled shoes to work.

Using the computer

From "Preventing the Number One Illness in the Workplace," Susan Peterson, Fitness Management Magazine:

- Position your computer directly in front of you. Don't turn your chair so that you're typing to one side.
- Sit well back in your chair and keep both of your feet on the floor when typing. If necessary, use a footrest.
- Position the top of your computer screen slightly below eye level. If necessary, adjust the screen. A phone book or a ream of paper, for example, can be used to raise the screen.
- Vary the position of your body occasionally while typing to relieve the tension on your back, neck and shoulders.
- Take frequent breaks—one to two minutes—from sitting every 30-60 minutes.

Child care

From "How to Finally Get Rid of Back Pain," Richard Laliberte:

- Prevent back pain by holding your baby as close as possible to you and letting him/her rest on your body (on your hip or shoulder, for instance).
- For proper crib-lift form, bend over and slide the baby close to the side of the crib, then lift and straighten your back. A 15-pound baby held close to your body requires 15 pounds of force to lift, but a 15-pound baby held 2 feet away from you feels twice as heavy.

Sleep

From Prevention Magazine:

- Sleeping on your stomach can cause a strain on your back. However, if that is the only way you can sleep, here is a tip from Dr. Leon Root's book "Oh, My Aching Back." He says rest your head at the edge of your pillow or better yet, use no pillow. Minimize twisting by bending one leg and turning your head to that side. Then put a pillow underneath your pelvis and bent leg to support the lower back.
- If you sleep on your back, a pillow under your knees will comfortably flex your lower spine.
- To avoid neck and shoulder aches, use a pillow that's low enough to support your head without flexing your neck.
- Be sure you're warm enough. If you have to stay curled up all night to stay warm, your back's likely to get sore.
- You need enough room to maneuver. It's normal to move your arms and legs during the night, and to roll from side to side. This prevents your joints from staying in one position for too long and getting stiff overnight.

Flying

From Prevention Magazine:

- You can tote heavy travel packs without contorting your back by choosing posture-friendly luggage. Get suitcases with permanent or retractable handles that—at full extension and while the case is resting upright—come closest to wrist level when you're standing straight with your arms down by your side. Opt for bags with hefty padding on shoulder and hand straps.
- On long flights, avoid crossing your legs. Whether you place an ankle over the opposite thigh or rest a thigh over the opposite knee, you temporarily shorten your leg muscles, curve your spine, create an uneven weight bearing down on the hips and pelvis, or irritate the nerves responsible for pain down the leg.
- Ideally, you should get up from your seat at least once every hour on long flights. When that's impossible, sit with both feet flat on the ground or with your legs crossed at the ankles.
- Put one or two small pillows behind your lower back.

Driving

From Prevention Magazine:

- When driving, angle your seat back from

PREVENTING/ C3

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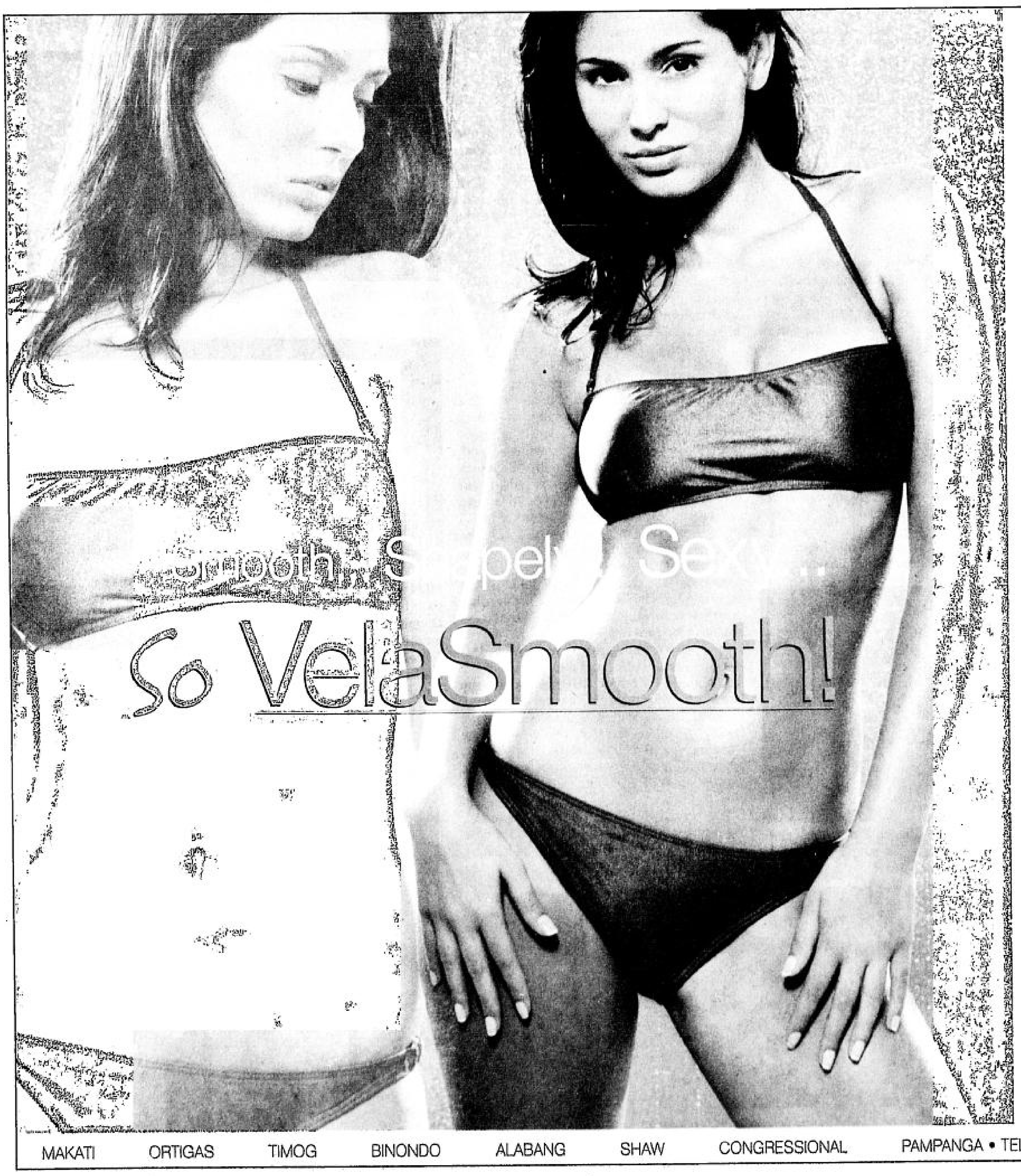
Mr. Lu Liong-Yu, founder of CCAC & world acclaimed H.K. Chef/ Instructor of authentic Chinese dishes will teach in Manila from March 13 to 19 (Many new recipes will be taught for the 1st time only). New & old students are welcome. Call us for details. While for those who live in the South and are interested to learn how to COOK AUTHENTIC CHINESE DISHES, but don't have the time to come to Manila, Mr. Lu will conduct lessons in CEBU CITY at Diplomat Hotel (F. Ramos st.) from Apr. 2 to 15. Enrollment starts Mar. 28. Lessons in DAVAO CITY will start Apr. 21. Enrollment at MANDARIN TEA GARDEN, Guerrero Br. starts Apr. 18. Classes in Manila will resume fr. May 10 to 28 only.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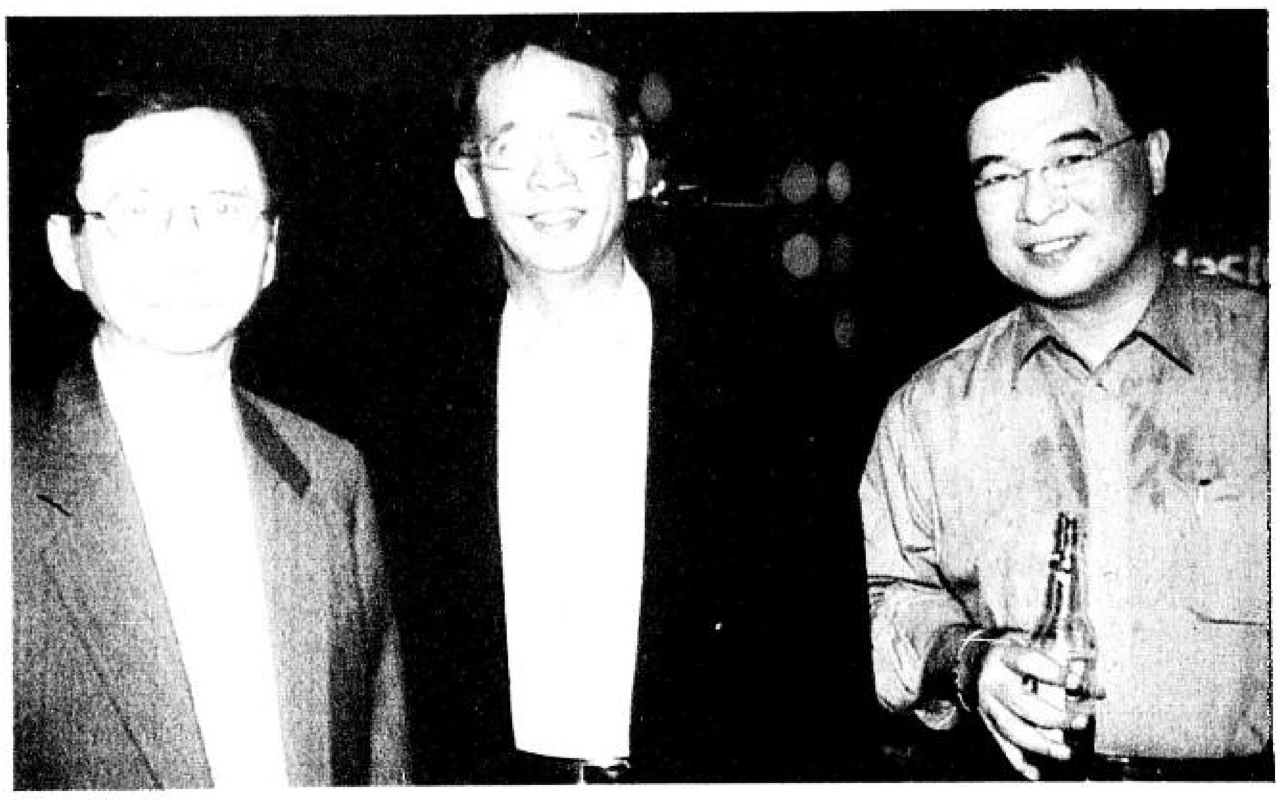


HOTSHOT bankers Tony Go of Equitable Card Network, Gigi Montinola of BPI, and MasterCard Philippines' country manager Jose Rene "Poch" Villareal

NONA Villapena of HSBC; Anton Corro, director for operations and member relations of MasterCard; Tonette Lau of SM; Chris Paraiso and Eric Cruz of HSBC

MICHELINA Triwardhany of Citibank (right), HSBC's Martin Cook and wife Beverly, with Claire Yap

Masters of finance show they know how to party

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photos by Alex Van Hagen using **Kodak** EasyShare system

HEY, when you have super hotshot executives from prestigious financial institutions in the country reaffirming their full support for a credit card, then you can be sure it's MasterCard International, *palanggas*.

The occasion was the annual celebration by their global card partner at the chi-chi Manila Polo Club in Forbes Park, *natch*. Some 300 hot invitees turned up for the MaterCard bash, making the event a truly smashing one, a salute to another successful year of MasterCard, *palanggas*.

Très, très visible were executives of AIG, Banco de Oro, BPI, Citibank, East West Bank, Equitable Card Network, HSBC and Standard Chartered Bank, plus heavyweights from Smart Communications and the SM group.

Present were **Tessie Tan**, senior vice president of BPI; **Sanjay Aggarwal**, senior vice president and head of cards and personal loans of Standard Chartered Bank; and **Belen C. Lim**, president of Security Bank Cards Corporation, plus others too brilliant to mention, dahlings.

"Every year, the MasterCard business in the Philippines continues to grow and, in your distinguished company and with your support, we at MasterCard will set many more milestones," said **Jose Rene Villareal**, Philippine country manager of MasterCard International.

Naturellement, the best part was when it was time to party. And man, did they party to the hot beat of The Circus Band, a group of young, hip, talented musicians with an eclectic repertoire.

For extras, MasterCard held loads of fun contest, and raffled off fab top-of-the-line prizes.

Now, that's partying *palanggas*, the MasterCard way. *N'est-ce pas*?

For men only

Hey guys, there's something special for all of you now, and it's about time too, *di bala*? So, when the invite to the grand inauguration of renowned Institut Santre arrived, some wives were quick to complain, "Why men only?"

Well, men got "an introduction to the non-invasive treatments offered by the first and only body toning and slimming center, exclusively (yes, you read right) for men," which would give them a must—healthy way to life that will make them look and feel good through their maturing years.

Dr. **Jaime Galvez Tan** explained how men should be aware of the risks that fat deposits could bring when unchecked.

And, you know what, many showed up for the cocktails despite other social and business obligations that evening. Canadian lawyer **Kurt Aydin, Vic Cheng**, Jaguar's **Willie Soong**, the "Straight Talk"-ing man, **Cito Beltran**. Even Ambassador **Jesus "Chuching" Tambunting**, a health buff, was there, *palanggas*.

Ambassador **Jose Syjuco**, and Metro Society boys **Apa Ongpin** and **Raul Manzano**, both over their regular weights, underwent body analysis to check their water retention levels, fat and body mass index.

Institut Santre is truly a place where all you guys will be treated professionally and expertly. The woman in your life won't worry as you will be spending two hours weekly at a place where your health comes first, dahlings.

Check it out on Jupiter Street, Bel-Air, or call 7595599 or visit www.institutsantre.com. Remember, health is wealth, *palanggas*.

Still king

There's really no stopping our country's absolutely awesome Concert King, **Martin Nievera**. As usual, he delivered another magnificent performance at the Waterfront Hotel ballroom in Cebu. With the real cool, **Patti Austin**, no less, *palanggas*, the show drew people like honeycomb to bees.

Needless to say, Cebu's hot-hot list from the creamiest of the cream filled the ballroom. Heading the pack were political powerhouse *familles*—the **Osmeña** clan, the **Lhuilliers, Fernans, Lu Yms, Gaisanos** and the **Gullas**, with vivacious **Eva Gat** the helm.

But the big news was Cebu conquered Patti Austin, who fell in love with the Star City. Patti was impressed tremendously during her stay, thanks to her gracious hosts, attractive **Glenna Fernan-Guidicelli** and Italian husband **Gianluca**, parents of popular karting champion **Matteo Guidicelli**, who is now a star in the galaxy, thanks to starmaker, the one and only **Joji Dingcong**, *palanggas*. The couple showed the diva "the best of Cebu!"

Glenna, together with Joji D. (who manages Martin Nievera and Matteo, among others, as if you didn't know) brought Patti to the fabulous bag exporter, "Ferimar," owned by Glenna's sister, **Iris Fernan-Arcenas**. Patti was like a child in a candy store.

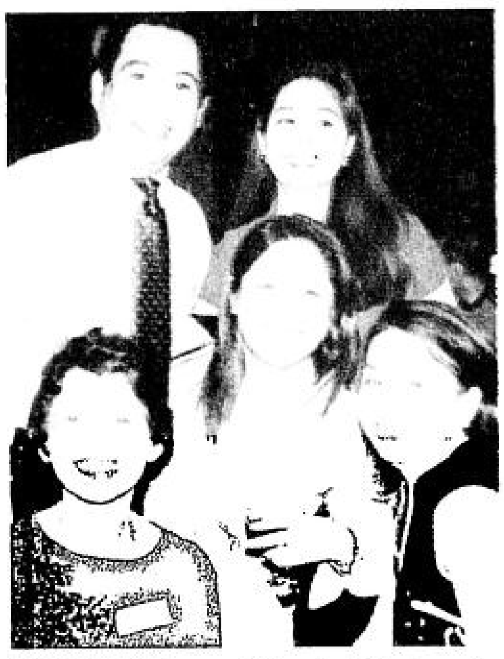
Après an hour's stay in the showroom, Patti ordered "16 fantastic handbags," absolutely taken by the design and materials used.

Next stop was the extraordinary furniture and home accessories showroom of Cebu's classy, stylish, beautiful, vivaciously adorable **Marguerite Lhuillier**. While browsing around, Patti gushed, "My God, I should tell **Quincy (Jones)** about this place... he is redoing his house, he should have known about this place earlier... all the things here are amazing! I should mention this to **Oprah**, too." Yes, dahlings, the two famous hotshots are among Patti's closest pals.

Next day, the gracious Marguerite L. hosted an exclusive cocktail party in Patti's honor in her gorgeous sprawling mansion in Maria Luisa that has a fab view of the city.

As if that was enough to exhaust anyone, Patti, who's just a darling, did a quick visit to the fab Shangri-La Mactan where she had a really late lunch, while taking in the magnificence of the hotel, before heading to the world-class toy factory owned by the Guidicellis. Again, she was simply overwhelmed by the creativity and craftsmanship of every item in the showroom. She declared, "This country has so much talent."

Patti vowed, "My God, this place is beautiful, the people are beautiful... and what they have here is awesome. I will be back in the summer for sure." Way to go, gal.



ANDREW Cajucom of Standard Chartered Bank, Judith Dayrit of MasterCard, Anya Cajucom of AIG; (seated) Annie del Mundo of BPI and Marion Kohchet-Chua of Citibank

EQUITABLE Card Network executives Fol Rana and Harry Gue

DAN Ibarra of Smart Communications Inc., Pepo Nuñez of Security Bank Cards Corp., and Joven Reyes of RCBC BanKard

COCKTAIL hour: Marguerite Lhuillier, Lani Osmeña, Glenna Guidicelli and Patti Austin (seated) at the reception Marguerite hosted at her home

THEY wowed the audience: Patti Austin and Martin Nievera had a sold-out performance at Cebu's Waterfront Hotel.

ROLLY Tanchanco, executive VP of BDO; Junie Veloso of HSBC and Jojo Ocampo of BPI

TAIPAN William Go and construction magnate Jun Palafox

GUEST speaker Dr. Jaime Galvez Tan

BRILLIANT, dashing businessmen. Mike Toledo, Basil Ong and Thomas Ng, CEO of ABB

MEN who care for their health: Apa Ongpin with mega businessman Ed Ferreira and Cocktales' Vic Agustin

BUSINESSMAN Henry Zabarte signs up for a body analysis.

GIANLUCA Guidicelli

MATTEO Guidicelli, the karting champ, also helped entertain Patti A.

STAR-MAKER Joji Dingcong with Glenna Guidicelli, Marguerite L. and Patti A.

HOTSHOTS of the fab Institut Santre: Stephanie de los Santos (left) and Joy Siao flank their principal from Hong Kong, Venice Man

Are psychic phenomena the work of the devil?

INNER AWARENESS

Jaime T. Licauco

I OFTEN encounter two nagging questions regarding the study of psychic or paranormal phenomena. The first is: "Does its study affect one's religion or belief in God?" The second is: "Aren't all these phenomena the work of the devil?"

The questions seem to concern only Filipinos. Foreigners hardly ask them.

Many Filipinos are interested in studying the hidden or esoteric powers of humans and in expanding their consciousness but are afraid that it would upset their religious beliefs. Some orthodox religions have, in fact, prohibited their members from getting involved with even the most superficial and harmless psychic practices because of this fear.

Such fear, I believe, is largely unfounded. One who studies properly the hidden laws of nature and latent powers of humans may even develop a closer relationship with God. He begins to appreciate the more mystical or hidden aspects of certain religious practices and doctrines. Soon he realizes that all religions have one goal: The perfection of a human being and union with God.

What may change is a person's concept of God and this may cause some problems at first. In the traditional Christian teaching, God is an all-powerful personal being with emotions of anger, love and even vengeance. He is supposed to be the dispenser of rewards and punishments.

In some Eastern mystical and psychic circles, however, God is not seen as a personal being like a human, but as an intelligent, creative cosmic energy or force. In this view, it is man who rewards and punishes himself, following the inexorable laws of karma, the universal law that adjusts effects to their causes.

Master of his destiny

Since God made man's will absolutely free, he alone can choose what to do with his life and is solely responsible for his thoughts and actions. God is, of course, always there to guide and give counsel, but he couldn't interfere with a person's free will.

To do so would violate God's own nature. A person's job is to make his will conform with God's will. Before a human can do this, he must know his real self and his true origins.

This view need not be in conflict with traditional religious belief. In fact, it even reinforces one's faith in the utter goodness, power and omniscience of God. It makes God's ways more understandable and reasonable because the hidden spiritual laws, once understood and practiced, become pathways to higher consciousness and, ultimately, to divinity.

The study of paranormal and psychic phenomena, the hidden laws of nature and of mysticism, may make a person less religious (in the orthodox sense), but it can certainly make him more spiritual. He becomes less prone to following external rituals and dogmas and more concerned with direct communication with the spirit world and the divine.

Biblical test

As to the often repeated charge that all these are the devil's work, my advice is to test it according to the Bible itself: "By their fruits, you shall know them." If these powers indeed come from the devil, nothing good can ever result from them.

Yet it is a fact that people of sound mind and balanced personalities who have studied the hidden laws of nature, which is what esoteric science is all about, have become better Christians, Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims and even human beings.

Let as not judge psychism and paranormal phenomena by the behavior of a few questionable characters who get involved in such pursuits. We find similar unsavory characters in all professions or callings, including the priesthood.

Filipino Christians especially have the tendency to attribute everything extraordinary or unexplainable to the devil, as if he is the only being capable of doing such things. We often give the devil more credit than he deserves.

We must now begin to realize that the forces of good, the Beings of Light, are also capable of performing extraordinary or paranormal things. These phenomena need not come from the devil all the time.

As Jesus Christ himself very clearly pointed out in John (14:12): "The works I have done you can do." Why then do we consider those with special psychic powers to be evil? Isn't there something basically wrong with this view? Couldn't we regard such phenomena or powers to be normal and natural attributes of the human soul and the human mind?

It is the abuse of such powers that we should guard against and should condemn, but not the powers themselves. For even Jesus Christ exhibited or performed many of them and told us to follow him and be like him. "He who believes in me," he said to the disciples, "will be able to do all the works that I have done and much more than these."

Address letters to this column to Prince Plaza I, 106 Legazpi St., Legazpi Village, Makati City. Call 8107245 or 8926806 for information on seminars I conduct. E-mail jlicauco@edsamail.com.ph. Visit http://jlicauco.shorturl.com. Listen to my dzMM radio program every 7-8 p.m., Sunday

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Lecture series on acupuncture

A SERIES of lectures and hands-on training on simplified medical acupuncture and acupressure will be conducted starting March 9 at the second floor of Mercury Drug, Glorietta 3, Makati City.

The lecture series is being conducted by the Living Life Well Medical Spa and Complementary Alternative Medicine (CAM) Clinic.

The sessions, to be conducted by Dr. Alfonso T. Lagaya, medical director of Living Life Well, are designed for physicians who would like to add pain- and stress-relief therapies in their treatments, as well as for nonmedical people like physical therapists, parents and everyone interested.

Lagaya, an expert on traditional Chinese and Filipino healing techniques, was the first director general of the Department of Health's Philippine Institute of Traditional and Alternative Health Care. He is currently the program director of the American Academy of Family Medicine.

Module 1, to be conducted 1-5 p.m., March 9 and 11, focuses on pain and stress relief. Module 2, scheduled for 1-5 p.m., March 16 and 18, covers computer-aided traditional Chinese medicine diagnosis and simplified clinical acupuncture and acupressure.

Call 8164733.

Preventing back pain in daily activities

From page C1

the vertical position to where it's comfortable. Provide lumbar support (even if it's just by stuffing a rolled towel or T-shirt behind your lower back), and shift positions frequently.

- Move your seat forward so you can reach the pedals without having to stretch your legs and arch your back.
- Men should know that a bulging wallet in the hip pocket can be a source of back pain.
- On long drives, stopping once every hour for a few minutes of side bends and stretches is ideal.
- Dr. Malcolm Pope, director of the Iowa Spine Research, says long car rides can harm your back because of the phenomenon of "whole body vibration." He says slow down when the road gets rough because speed magnifies the effects of bumps.

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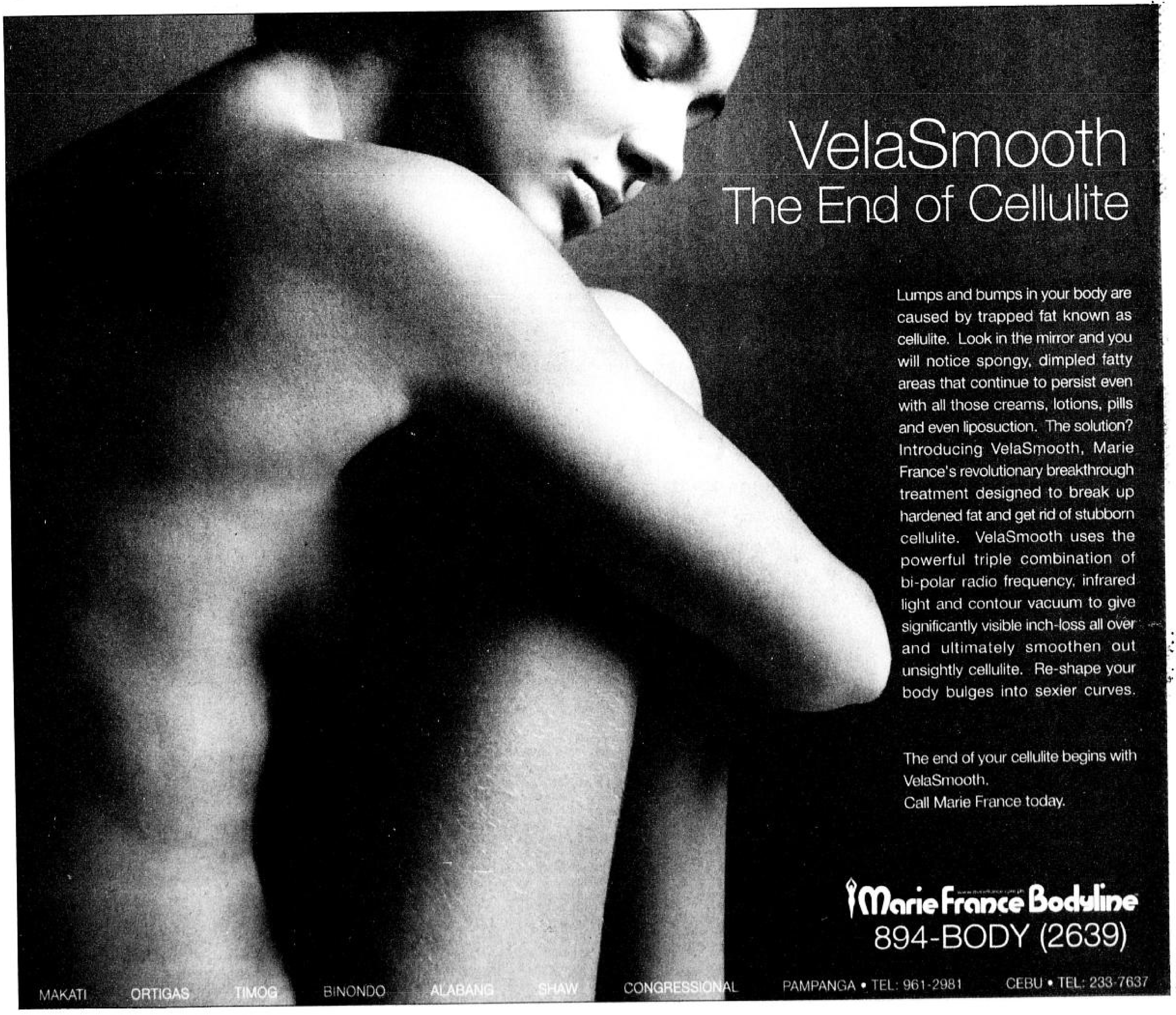

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Bottled magic

By Pam Pastor

DANDRUFF. Warts. Constipation. Gum problems. Excess weight. Diabetes. Heart disease. Even AIDS.

Is it possible to find the answer to all this in just one bottle?

Peter Paul Philippine Corp., a longtime manufacturer and exporter of desiccated coconut (Hershey's and Mars get their supplies from the company), seems to have succeeded in placing a miracle in a bottle with its Clear Virgin Coconut Oil.

What sets this company apart from other virgin coconut oil producers is the strict and careful process they follow in manufacturing their product. Jose T. Quimson, president of the Peter Paul Philippine Corp., says, "We have passed ISO (International Organization for Standardization) standards and we believe firmly in quality control."

BRUCE Fife says virgin coconut oil is the healthiest oil on earth.

Growing fan club

That's good news for the growing number of virgin coconut oil fans in the country.

With several similar products in the market, Quimson stresses the importance of choosing the right brand of virgin coconut oil. "If you're going to drink something, you better make sure it comes from a reliable source."

These past months, virgin coconut oil has created a buzz for its countless uses, winning over many Filipinos.

"If there was an oil you could use for your daily cooking needs, that helped protect you from heart disease, cancer and other degenerative conditions, improved your digestion, strengthened your immune system, protected you from infectious illnesses, and helped you lose excess weight, would you be interested?" Bruce Fife, ND, author of "The Healing Miracles of Coconut Oil," asked in his book.

And, apparently, many people are interested.

There are people who drink one or two tablespoons of virgin coconut oil every day. Some use it for cooking, as a substitute for olive oil. Others use it to top off their salads and rice. I've actually drizzled it over ice cream and, yes, it was good.

Best oil

Fife proclaimed virgin coconut oil as the healthiest oil on earth. And he had data to back up his claim.

As cooking oil, studies have shown it can lower cholesterol levels. It is also recommended for people with diabetes because of its zero sugar content.

Virgin coconut oil has been known to aid in the cure of dandruff, skin allergies and acne. Some people use it as toothpaste. Others have used it as lubricant. It has also been reported to help ease the discomfort of hemorrhoids.

The benefits of virgin coconut oil seem infinite

But Fife says there are more benefits to be derived from the oil. Virgin coconut oil intake may reduce the risk of atherosclerosis (blocking of the arteries), heart disease, cancer. It can help prevent bacterial, viral and fungal infections (including yeast infection). It supports the immune system and healthy metabolic functions, helps control diabetes, acts as energy source and improves digestion and nutrient absorption.

Virgin coconut oil also supplies nutrients needed for good health. It has less calories than other fats, promotes weight loss, prevents osteoporosis (brittle bones), premature aging and wrinkling of the skin. It keeps skin soft and smooth, helps protect against skin cancer and other blemishes and functions as a protective antioxidant.

And virgin coconut oil has a long shelf life. Yeah, like you'd still have some left after using it for all those things!

Many people gladly share stories of how virgin coconut oil changed their lives. Soon, one of those stories may be yours.

Peter Paul Pure and Clear Virgin Coconut Oil is available in 250 ml bottles at SM Supermarkets and Cash and Carry outlets nationwide. For bulk orders, call 6335978/79 and 6336387/88 or e-mail petrpaul@pworld.net.ph

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ILLUSTRATION BY STEPH BRAVO

Look good, feel good–a summer checklist

INSIDE OUT
Cory Quirino

SUMMER is upon us. And the sun is scorching while the glare is blinding.

If you think being under a shady tree shields you from the sun's damaging ultraviolet rays, you've got another think coming.

The countdown to a better-looking you this summer has begun. But shouldn't you also pay a little more attention to your health and well-being?

Here's how you can ensure you do not only look good but feel good during the dry months ahead:

- Smile. A sunny disposition can outshine a bright summer's day. A glum face will only attract darkness into your life. Shun the shadows and step into the light.
- Meditate. More and more studies show that people who meditate have greater control over their thoughts and feelings. They are able to detach themselves from stress with greater ease and are not easily fazed by stressful situations.

And because emotions have a physical manifestation in the body, you can easily appreciate why emotional control leads to better health. Practice the art of silence by giving yourself a quiet 15 minutes in the morning and evening.

- Affirmations go hand in hand with your wellness outlook. To want to be well is already an affirmation.

Do consider talking more positively to yourself. It helps. This may seem silly to you but I am sure you've caught yourself talking to yourself.

Words of encouragement can only benefit you. Motivating yourself with positive self-talk will only do you good. Try this morning and evening ritual.

Upon waking, say: "This day is glorious and I declare it so."

Before going to bed, say: "Thank you for a glorious day and tomorrow's greater glories, and this is so."

- Relaxation is one of the best ways to ease the effects of stress on the body and mind. Learn to take it easy.

Rest time is the best time to unwind. Not only is it beneficial to your health, it's also rejuvenating. Most relax regimens include a trip to the spa, a visit to the salon, an afternoon of movies or simply a good laugh with friends.

Take time out to relax. You owe yourself a break.

- Sleep is essential to good health. The brain needs to rest, thus, six to eight hours of sleep every night is a must. The body needs the time for cell-repair and rebuilding.

Try your best to sleep before midnight. It is said you get the best quality sleep when you do that.

Taking short naps will make you look more rested and feel better recharged.

- Rethink your whole wellness lifestyle. Study your goals more closely and give yourself a nutrition makeover by listing your nutritional needs. Consider the following: your food intake/meals for you and the family, supplements, the water you drink.

Answer this question: "Do you want to be well?" If yes, then read on. If no, you can stop right here.

- Think nutrition. Before you eat anything, ask yourself: "Is this good for me?" Once you start this practice, you will note an important change. You will overcome cravings more easily than before. You will not be tempted by comfort foods. Well, at least, not often.
- Exercise. Take up a sport or dancing. Take 30-minute brisk walks daily if possible. Take the stairs instead of the elevator. Three flights will do your heart good (assuming you don't have a health condition).
- The skin on your face ages faster than the skin on the rest of your body. Intrinsic aging is, according to Dr. Michael Perricone in his book, "The Wrinkle Cure," the rate at which your skin ages in the course of time. Extrinsic aging is aging due to external factors like sunlight, sickness, pollution.

Protect yourself from the sun's harsh rays. Wear a sun block, SPF 25-30, daily and replenish twice a day (if you are under the sun constantly, replenish thrice a day). Even if you have an umbrella or hat or inside a nipa hut, the hot summer wind or reflection of the sun on the sand and sea will burn you. If you plan to sunbathe, a sun block is a must.

Over exposure to the sun will result in ravages to the skin sooner than expected even for those in their 20s. Sun exposure ages the skin and fair-skinned people are more susceptible to skin damage than darker individuals.

Emergency skin saver: Adopt a high antioxidant (substances that neutralize damaging oxygen free radicals) regimen. Take freshly-squeezed fruit and vegetable juices everyday. Supplement with a multivitamin and mineral tablets or capsules. Skin-saving facials are also helpful.

Ask your dermatologist or enroll in a Murad Spa (Rustans Makati) skin treatment package using the Vitamin C therapy. Vitamin C, an antioxidant, can reduce fine lines by increasing the skin's production of collagen. Or try the IPL treatment (Intense Pulse Light) which can remove/reduce blemishes and freckles after eight to nine sessions.

Home spa: You can exfoliate on your own with an easy scrub using salt for the body and sugar for the face. Mix with oil like virgin coconut, corn, olive...

- If you have weight goals know the rule: Burn more than what you eat. Or eat less if you move less. Simple?

One woman, who was 20 pounds overweight, vowed to slim down in 30 days, swearing to lose 1 pound a day. But most dietitians/nutritionists consider this a suicidal/crash diet. Weight loss should be gradual.

Nevertheless, a diet of tofu, grilled fish, rice (half cup per meal), fresh green salad, plus daily aerobics enabled the woman to reach her goal.

But a crash diet like hers can cause cravings and dizziness, which she experienced. If she spread her weight loss plan over three to four months, the effects would not have been drastic.

Losing just 5 pounds is enough to boost your self-confidence. It gives you the motivation to lose the next 10. So, go easy, but surely. Start cutting back on your sweets, fats and carbo. And be active.

Light and love!

For professional help in keeping your skin healthy during the hot and dry months, call Murad Spa, 8161806; and skin specialists Dr. Raul Guanzon, 6830448; and Dr. Manny Calayan, 7512724.

Gym offers Japanese martial art training

AIKIDO, the Japanese martial art of mind and body harmony, is now offered at the Red Corner Fitness and Boxing Club in Libis, QC and at the Hotel Intercontinental on Ayala Avenue, Makati City.

Two demonstration classes will be conducted at 6:30 p.m. on March 9 at the Libis branch and March 10 at Intercon.

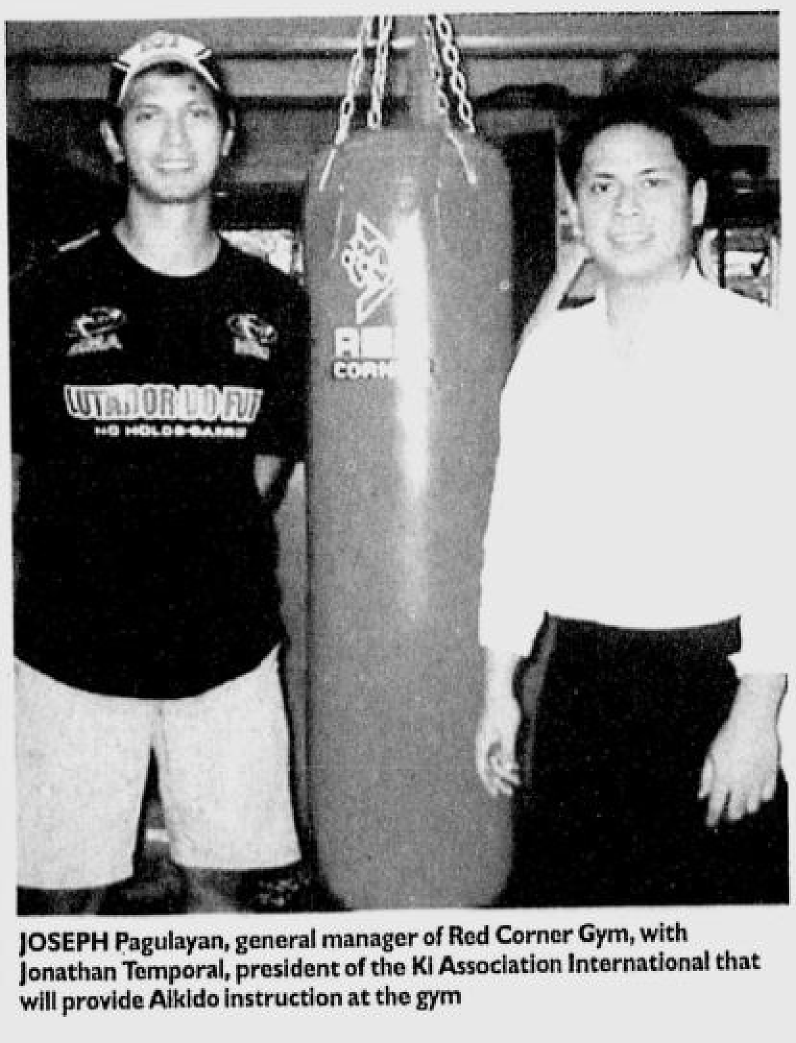
Regular classes will begin on March 22 at the Makati gym and March 23 in Libis.

Under an agreement between Red Corner's general manager Joseph Pagulayan and Jonathan Temporal, president of the Ki Association International (KIAI) that will provide Aikido instruction at the gym.

KIAI is composed of Aikido practitioners dedicated to the promotion and teaching of physio-mental unity through the self-defense movements of Aikido, mental focusing, and relaxation techniques.

It has eight schools (*dojo* in Japanese) in Manila, all handled by black-belt instructors under the supervision of KIAI chief instructor, Ernesto Talag Sensei (teacher).

Call the Red Corner Fitness and Boxing Club at 8159711 local 7898/8916139/7527267.



JOSEPH Pagulayan, general manager of Red Corner Gym, with Jonathan Temporal, president of the KI Association International that will provide Aikido instruction at the gym

MEDICard The Healthcare I Deserve!

How is rabies transmitted to humans?

Take Charge Doc!

Rabies can affect all warm-blooded animals (mammals) including, man. The illness is transmitted through infected tissues or body secretions, usually by saliva. Most cases of exposure to rabies are through the bite of infected animals. Transmission occurs when the infected secretions (i.e. blood and saliva) are introduced through the injured skin or mucous membrane.

In urban areas, the illness is propagated mainly by non-immunized dogs and cats. In the wild, propagation is by wolves, bats and other mammals.

A rare cause of rabies transmission occurs in human transplantation of infected tissues such as the case in corneal transplants.

This week's answer to our feature question on rabies transmission is courtesy of Dr. Jose Rodrigo G. Torres, our accredited specialist based in Bautista Hospital located at P. Burgos Ave., Caridad, Cavite. Dr. Torres specializes in Internal Medicine and joined MEDICard in 2003. He finished his studies in Medicine at the University of Santo Tomas, and in 1999 his residency training for Internal Medicine at the UST Hospital. He also subspecializes in Cardiology and is a Fellow to the Philippine College of Physicians and Philippine College of Cardiologists. Members may visit him for consultations at the hospital's OPD clinic from Mondays to Fridays, 3 PM to 6 in the evening.

MEDICard's Medical Director, Dr. Nicky Montoya answers questions on health through the assistance and expertise of MEDICard's network of accredited specialists. Write to Dr. Nicky or E-mail him at inquiry@medicardphils.com for your inquiries on health matters.

Nicky

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